JACOB'S BRIDGE OVER THE JORDAN.

THE

RIVERS AND LAKES

OF

SCRIPTURE

BY THE

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"Thus hast thou lain for ages, ironbound
As with a curse. Thus art thou doom'd to lie,
Yet not for ever."

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NOTE.

THE Holy Land has been called a Believer's Second Bible; and though the name be scarcely accurate, the sights and scenes of that country furnish at once an eloquent comment and an irrefutable confirmation of the written Word. When men, indeed, of the school of Voltaire or Volney resort to Palestine,—not to ask, What is truth? but to seek confirmations of a foregone conclusion against Revelation,—much may be found to make the blind more densely dark, and the infidel more infidel still. But do we ask, In what relation does the present state of Palestine stand to the word of God? for it? or against it?—the reply extorted by facts must be that the fulfilment answers to the prediction as face to face in a glass. Conviction is thus deepened in the inquiring mind; and from all Palestine, as from Nimroud, and Khorsabad, and Kouyunjik, the traveller gathers new illustrations of his Bible, as well as fresh attestations of its truth.

The following Views suggest some of the lessons which may be learned or deepened beside the chief Rivers and Lakes mentioned in Scripture. Such scenes in every land are crowded with attractions: in the Lands of the Bible they are, moreover, hallowed by associations with Heaven; and though only hints or glimpses are here presented, they may help to deepen, in some minds, the impressions of truth, or increase the joy of believing.

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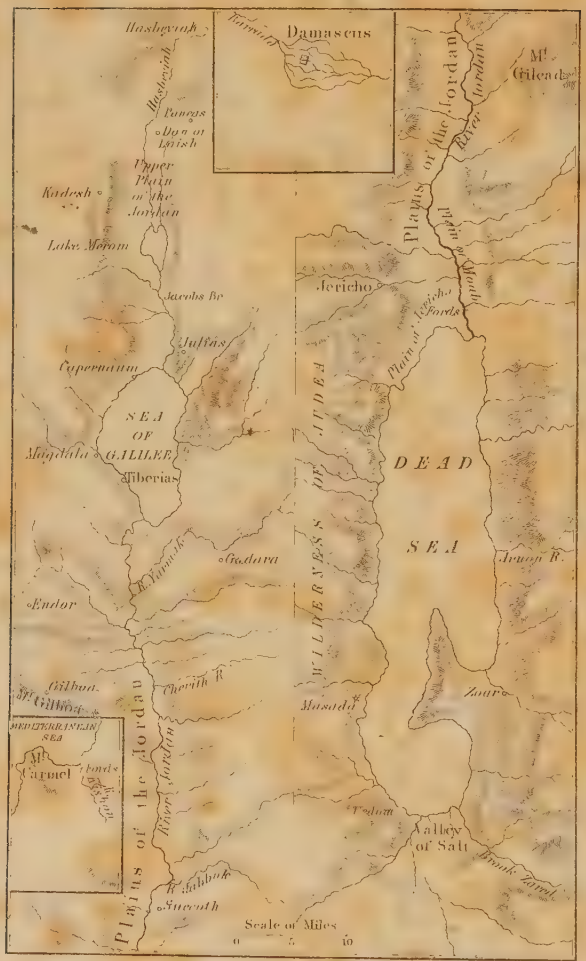

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THE

RIVERS AND LAKES OF SCRIPTURE.

INTRODUCTION.

We can scarcely even glance at the Bible without perceiving how many of its beauties, of its lessons, and its joys, are associated with its streams. In every land, rivers are connected with fertility and loveliness—with rich verdure—with pleasant villages and happy homes. But in the East all this is felt in a far higher degree than in the West. Even a little brook, or a trickling fountain, may there be deemed a rich inheritance, and battles have been fought, and lives have been sacrificed, to retain or secure such possessions—in a word, a well, a brook, or a river, is prized by the Orientals beyond what the western nations can easily understand. The Ganges, the Nile, the Jordan, and other rivers, have actually been worshipped as gods.

And all this has passed into the books of eastern nations: it appears very fully in the Bible. Allusion after allusion testifies there that the minds of men lingered fondly around the streams of Palestine, and displayed in a hundred ways the joy which they felt in that "land of brooks of water." From that fine outburst of holy confidence in God, the forty-sixth Psalm, which proclaims that

> "A river is whose streams do glad
> The city of our God,"

to the close of the Scriptures, where we read of "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," everything betokens the joy of men amid the streams of the Bible. The peace of God's children is compared to

the flowing of a "mighty river," so copious and constant may it be. A holy man is likened to "a tree planted by the rivers of water." The Saviour of sinners is commended to us, by comparing him to "rivers of water in a dry place." In short, did we blot from the Bible the illustrations derived from fountains and streams, with the imagery which they suggest, and the blessings which they prefigure, we should destroy much of the Bible's beauty, and enfeeble not a little of its meaning.

But such references to Scripture may perhaps warrant a more ample consideration.—Even the heavenly state is supposed to be rendered more attractive or more intelligible to man by such allusions; and when we read that the Lamb is to lead the redeemed to "living fountains of water," we may understand how fully eastern notions of man's beatitude are intertwined with the idea of streams and fountains. To be denied a sight of the rivers, the floods, and the brooks, is to be doomed to misery; while the emblem of perfect felicity or great prosperity is found in "righteousness running down our streets like a stream." In this manner, the sentiment which taught one of our poets to tell of him who—

"Pored upon the brook that babbled by,"

and another to speak so touchingly of

"Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracles of God,"

is inwoven with the whole Bible, and he who does not love to wander or to meditate by the green margin of our streams, is scarcely prepared to understand some of the allusions of Scripture. The "places where prayer was wont to be made" of old were generally found on the margin of some river, as if such a scene could help, like music, or like the silence of night, to attune the soul for communion with its God. And then the queenly cities, from Babylon on the Euphrates, and Nineveh on the Tigris, to Rome on the Tiber, and London on the Thames, have all grown up amid such scenes. They have consequently witnessed the most placid,

as well as the most tumultuous events in man's history, and they are happy who can catch the inspiration which hovers in every land around them. Even Eden needed streams to make its beauty perfect; and thus from that Eden which we have lost, onward to the better Paradise which has been restored, many a joy is floated into the soul of man—we are helped on our way to the home

> "Where never more may one dark tear
> Bedim our burning eyes;
> For every one we shed while here,
> In fearful agonies,
> Glitters a bright and dazzling gem
> In our immortal diadem."

Now, this condescension to man's weakness, or to his feeble comprehension of spiritual things, characterizes the whole of Revelation. What could we know of the Holy One, or that God who is a Spirit, unless he were described after the manner of man? Who can even tell us what a Spirit is, except by describing what it is *not?* Who can convey spiritual impressions into mortal minds, by any but material emblems or human adumbrations? Hence, then, the mind of God is mercifully revealed to us in human language, or by means of human deeds, and fears, and hopes, and feelings. Hence the unchanging One is spoken of as if he could repent, or grieve, or change. Hence, above all, "the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh;" for then only could we "acquaint ourselves with God," when we saw him incarnate in One who was "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person." In the same way, or upon the same principle, spiritual joys are insinuated into the mind by material emblems; in the present instance, by streams and springs, by dews and fountains. Palestine was proverbially abundant in these; and when traversed by the spiritual mind, that land accordingly becomes a vast commentator on the Bible.

It were pleasant, then, to wander by the margin of the Streams of Scripture, and study there what God taught, and inspiration

recorded, for guiding man to glory. Here, if anywhere in the world at all, we may find

> "Books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Would John's Book of Revelation be read with special zest in Patmos? Has the Epistle to the Romans gladdened many a soul in Rome, though read by stealth, and amid trembling there? Then it were no less gladdening to trace the story of Elijah by the brook Cherith, or of the Baptist by the river Jordan. That, however, is a privilege which comparatively few can enjoy; and in the following Views, with their relative descriptions, we would aid, as far as we can, in forming a correct idea of some of the lake and river scenery of the Bible. Men have gathered wisdom on the slopes of its mountains. They have disinterred many proofs of its truth from the ruins which are strewed so thickly over the land of wonders. Its naked but once terraced hills—its fertility once reckoned fabulous, but now amply attested, have all yielded instruction. Let us now, then, glance at its streams and its fountains, and try to learn wisdom by their margins.

> "'Twere musical, but sadly sweet,
> Such as when winds and harp-strings meet,"

to traverse that widowed land, and trace its decay in connection with the promises of a glory yet to come.

Premising that the following Eight Views supply in miniature a real PANORAMA OF THE JORDAN, we commence at the fountain-head of that river.

THE JORDAN AT HASBEYIAH.

THE JORDAN AT PANEAS.

1.—THE JORDAN AT HASBEYIAH.

THE Jordan is familiarly known as the chief river in the Holy Land, and forms the eastern boundary of Canaan Proper. Its fountain is always placed somewhere to the north of the lake of Gennesareth, but opinions are divided as to the precise spot. Some trace it only to Lake Huleh, anciently called Julias, a place which is half marsh and half lake, and which is at least one of the feeders of the river. Others, however, reckon a little lake called Phiala, the real fountain, and quote the authority of Josephus in defence of their opinion. He tells that Philip the Tetrarch cast some chaff into that lake, which afterwards re-appeared at the cavern of Paneas —to be immediately described—and hence some entertain no doubt that Lake Phiala is the source of the Jordan.

But another competitor for that honour is found at Tel-el-Kadi, the site of the ancient Dan, about three miles to the west of Paneas. There are some copious springs at that place, and they are deemed by various travellers the real fountain. More recent inquiries, however, made by modern travellers point us to a source different from all these, namely to Hasbeyiah, a village near the base of Mount Hermon. Our Engraving represents that fountain-head, which we adopt as the real source of the Jordan. It is described as a pleasing though rugged scene, where the olive shade is blended with less peaceful sights. The river is already sufficiently large to be spanned by a bridge, somewhat solid in its construction, though, a little higher up the stream, the water is turned off by a large stone dam, and supplies a current for driving a mill, as represented in the Engraving. A few yards still farther up, the source of the Jordan is found bubbling out from some

steep projecting rocks. The basin is described as being of great depth, and the water, though dark coloured, as transparent.

Still higher up, a winter torrent pours down a copious supply of water at certain seasons of the year. But as that stream becomes entirely dry in summer, whereas the other fountain is perennial, we may fairly regard it as the most northern source of the Jordan. The Hasbain, as it is there denominated, winds through a grove of willows and oleanders, surrounded by hills, and flowing over a bed of sand and pebbles. Slender sycamores, called the favourite companions of the rivers of Palestine, at some places line the stream, and for about three miles the infant Jordan, thus fringed, winds along. Near Hasbeyiah, it is about fifty feet broad; and thence traversing a beautiful wood of wild shrubs and olive trees, it deepens and expands, till it becomes the stream which increases the celebrity of a country otherwise celebrated by a thousand causes.—One illustrious traveller mused and moralized as he bestrode the Nile where it forms a feeble rill. Another exulted as he stepped across the newly formed Euphrates. Many a traveller has turned aside to visit the tiny fountain of the mighty Danube, and may we not equally rejoice by the source of the Jordan? It has been the witness of events the most appalling as well as the most merciful; and to the ear of faith, its banks are vocal with a thousand lessons.

The name of Tel-el-Kadi in this section, suggests a reference to the superstitions which once were rampant there. It is the same as Lasha, which is mentioned in Scripture as existing anterior to the time of Abraham (Genesis x. 19). At an early period of the Hebrew settlement in Canaan, it was seized by the tribe of Dan, and that tribe, in consequence, acquired possessions at both extremities of the Land of Promise—for their lot lay in the south, while Lasha lay in the extreme north. And it was not long ere idolatry appeared among the Danites. The proximity of the Pagan Sidonians, to whom Laish, or Lasha, had belonged, probably proved a snare, and as that sin early began, it was long con-

tinued, for we know at once from history, and from the denunciations of the prophets, that Jeroboam set up his golden calves for worship, and Laish, or Tel-el-Kadi, was one of the selected places. "Behold thy gods, O Israel!" then became the senseless cry, "and Jeroboam set the one calf in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan." —It is thus that wherever we go, into the crowded city or the desert place, we find that,—

"While every prospect pleases,
Man, man alone, is vile."

From Dan to Beer-sheba in the Holy Land—from country to country, from city to city, from home to home, from heart to heart, the same law operates, until the new law of love be obeyed, or till Almighty grace get the control of the mind to "make all things new" according to the promise.

Yet, with the Bible open before us, we should never speak in terms of despondency regarding the future of man. Even at Hasbeyiah, remote or inaccessible as it seems to us, travellers tell us that there are about 4000 souls which wear at least the Christian name. The demand for protestant books, for example the Life of Luther, in a tongue which the people understand, is said to be general; and some of the people, it was told to Dr. Wilson in 1843, were prepared to adopt the protestant religion, that is, the faith of the Bible as opposed to that of the priest. The labours and the lessons of American missionaries have created, or deepened, and extended these tendencies, and the effects have proved to be of a very decided kind; they are such as may well encourage those who seek to dispel darkness by introducing the light of life, and it is obvious that the terraces, where numerous olive, fig, and mulberry trees flourish luxuriantly near the town, are but types of the spiritual fruits which would follow spiritual culture.

Nor is this mere conjecture. A missionary, who resided for years in the East, has told us that one hundred and fifty of the people, some time ago, abandoned the superstitions which overlay the truth, and declared that they would "suffer themselves to be chopped like

tobacco," rather than draw back. They were soon put to the proof. Their patriarch, who resides at Damascus, was incensed by the intrusion of light into the domain of darkness. The Turkish authorities took the alarm, as if one of the radical laws of the Koran were trod upon by those converts. Persecution, compulsion, and restraint, the despot's ever ready arguments, were speedily employed, and the united influence of Britain, of Prussia, and France, was needed to secure a measure of toleration for the protestants of Hasbeyiah,—the men who sought their creed from the word of God, not from the dogmata of a creature. But neither the excommunication which followed, nor the obloquy which was heaped upon them, could drive *all* these Hasbeyian Christians into apostacy; and their case encourages the hope that these desert places will blossom yet. "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

2.—THE JORDAN AT PANEAS.

THIS place may be viewed as one of the sources of the Jordan, though, as we have seen, there is at least one other farther to the north. The waters which help to feed the stream here gush forth from a cave at the base of a high rock, where a temple once stood, dedicated to Pan, which gave name to the place; or Paneas, now changed by the Arabs into Banias. In the front of the rock, and just over the grotto, niches for statues are formed, indicating the purposes for which the fountain was at one time employed. But earthquakes, to which the region is subject, have changed the aspect of the place, and it is not easy now to trace with exactness the ancient descriptions. The fountain in a grotto, which Josephus describes, is choked up with rubbish and ruins, through which the waters have to force their way. These waters run in all directions through the village, with no regular channel, and promoting no useful purpose; and hence, where Idolatry once reigned, and Art had lavished its skill in constructing aqueducts, bridges, and other useful buildings, a wide desolation seems to prevail. Yet the vicinity of Paneas abounds in wood. Plantations of mulberry trees at some places adorn the scene, while the neighbouring hills are covered with groves of oak. At the same time, the waters of the fountain, wandering hither and thither without a channel, spread a kind of fertility, as irrigation ever does, and the modern village, though unseemly in itself, is hence hidden by the foliage of surrounding woods.

The Castle of Paneas stands proudly on a rock somewhat to the east of the village. It is nearly 3000 feet above the level of the sea; and the panoramic view from the ruin is majestic. Deep ravines and wooded slopes in the foreground, and Jebel-es-Shech,

the king of the mountains of Palestine, with all that is wild, and much that is soft and smiling all around, repay the traveller for his clamber to the summit. The castle is partly the work of the Romans, though other styles are traced by some in the structure, and the Cyclopean stones, the gates, the vaults, the tanks, and massive walls have surprised a succession of travellers through many generations. The place itself was built by Philip the Tetrarch, and called Cæsarea, in honour of the Emperor Tiberius, though it was afterwards named Neronias. To distinguish it from Cæsarea on the sea coast, it was called Cæsarea Paneas, or Cæsarea Philippi; and the ruins, which can still be traced in the neighbourhood, teach us to wonder as much at the grandeur of the Romans in Art, as at their insatiable thirst for conquest, and their power in arms.

This region, like most others in the Holy Land, has been consecrated by the presence of the Saviour. Waving all reference to visits regarding which there is some doubt, or cases regarding which all are not agreed, it may suffice to say, that it was when Jesus went to visit "the towns of Cæsarea Philippi," that he afforded Peter the memorable opportunity of confessing his faith, or announcing his creed regarding the person of his Lord—"Thou art the Christ." It was near the fountains of the Jordan that the Saviour began to teach the doctrine of the atonement (Mark viii. 31). It was there that Peter took the Saviour apart, and began to rebuke him (v. 32) for saying that he must suffer; and it was near Cæsarea Philippi that that loving Lord addressed that impetuous servant in words which seem to be harsh, but which are only profound—"Get thee behind me, Satan" (v. 33). It was there, farther, that the good Lord announced his exclusive terms of discipleship, namely, taking up the cross, and following him, though life should be lost in doing so (v. 34, 35). It was there, finally, that the only wise God, our Saviour, put the solemn questions, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" These and other things invest this region with a peculiar interest, and meditative minds,

amid the oak and mulberry groves of Cæsarea Philippi, may have their communion with Christ made closer, by the remembrance of what he did and taught when there.—When a vessel is ploughing her way through the sea, phosphorescent light often flashes from her prow, and sparkles along her wake. Now, the footprints of the Saviour are ever, in like manner, radiant with light; and if it were pleasant to study Virgil in the Cave of Cumæ, or Horace at the Sabine Farm, how much more the New Testament at Cæsarea Philippi!

We take it, then, in our hands. We are travelling in the region to which the Saviour resorted, or seated under the shadow of groves lineally descended from those which afforded him a canopy. We gaze upon the same skies, and witness the rising and the setting of the very same stars. But in the Book which we hold, we find truths which are destined to outlast the stars, and to see the heavens pass away like a scroll. What, then, are some of these truths? We have just quoted one. Under the shadow of Jebel-es-Shech, and amid the very scenes on which we are now gazing, He who spake as never man did, proclaimed, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Self-denial and the Cross—behold the primary elements in the Christian character, Christ himself being judge. As Jebel-es-Shech reigns over the scene amid which the words were spoken, these maxims should preside in the Christian's career.

True, we are prone to read them without allowing them free scope in ruling the life. We are ready to seek a better Christianity, or fabricate an easier yoke than Christ's; but that is never done except at the price of dishonour to his truth; and the true heroes of the Church have ever been they who sat down at Christ's feet as he taught at Cæsarea Philippi—who entered into the depths of his sayings—who, without dismay, took up the cross, and found, according to His words, that the yoke *was* easy, and the burden light.

Paul had learned that lesson; and what has *he* now thought of

his cross for eighteen centuries and more? The remembrance of it has only added rapture to the beatitudes of heaven.

And Luther also learned that lesson. He also was compelled to practise what Jesus taught among "the towns of Cæsarea Philippi;" and what has he thought of his trials, and buffetings, and sorrows, for the three centuries during which he has lived beyond the grave? They make his crown more bright, his hosanna more heart-sprung; and so for ever and ever with the multitude whom no man can number who practised what Jesus taught.

Or learn another lesson from Cæsarea Philippi. Tiberius, Nero, Philip the Tetrarch, and others of the sons of men have been greatly honoured there. Temples were built, colossal structures were reared, and much that was meant to bring glory to the creature was there beheld. But where are these creatures, and where that glory now? On the other hand, the Son of God appeared in his lowliness there. His presence passed like a gleam of sunshine over the scene,—it passed and was forgotten. But where is He now? On the throne of glory for ever, so that these scenes of blended grandeur and beauty, like ten thousand others, tell us of the blessedness of living for eternity and God—they assure us once more that the one enduring portion is that favour of God which is life.

3.—JACOB'S BRIDGE.

Such is the title of our next View, a scene not far distant from the Waters of Merom. In Arabic the name is Jisr-Benat-Yakub, "The Bridge of Jacob's Daughters," and tradition makes the patriarch cross the river at this spot. Whether that be true or not, it is well known that the caravans from Damascus to Akka and other places now cross this bridge. It is a substantial structure of three arches; but the Jordan here flows through, perhaps, the least attractive part of its course. The channel is formed mainly by black and barren lava rocks; and though the ruins which exist in the neighbourhood indicate that this place, like all the rest of Palestine, was well inhabited in ancient times, there is now but seldom a shelter for the wayfaring man. The river is here about eighty feet wide and four feet deep, and murmurs sadly amid the tokens of desolation.—The Acropolis and its crowd of ruins for Athens, the dreary Campagna for ancient Rome, and some spots like the present along the margin of the Jordan for Judah, form sad but befitting memorials.

It would be somewhat interesting to discover the precise spot by which Jacob, "with his staff, passed over the Jordan" (Gen. xxxii. 10), as well as his various movements, whether in fleeing from his injured brother at first, or afterwards in returning westward. And were we to trace with care the different stages of his journeyings, as far as the Bible enables us to do so, it would appear that this could scarcely be the spot at which the river was crossed. But tradition, regardless of such inquiries, has inseparably linked the patriarch's name with this scene. We shall see that the true passage should be sought considerably to the south of the Lake of Gennesareth; but the precise spot must be decided by the devotees of tradition on the one hand, and the inquirers after truth on

the other. Enough for us that here is the Jordan mournfully gliding downward to the Dead Sea.

But as we stand by this bridge, the Mohammedan traditions which are connected with it remind us that the followers of the false prophet profess to hold many things in common with those of Him who is "the Truth." They pay profound respect to the patriarchs—witness what they here call "Jacob's Bridge"—and profess to deem the dust of these worthies a precious deposit—witness their tombs at Hebron, guarded, as we are told they are, with superstitious care. Nay, even the Saviour himself they honour as a prophet, at the very time that they outrage his teaching, and try to falsify his predictions. Strange inconsistency this, though it is an inconsistency in which Mohammedans have too many imitators!

In our present scene, as in many others in the Holy Land, Mount Hermon rises high over all the rest—the "Sheikh of the Mountains" indeed. Madame de Stael, with a true sentiment, said that it was one of the pleasures of Rome, that while there we are always near the Tiber, and in the same spirit, it is a chief pleasure of Palestine that we are often in sight of Hermon. From the Upper Plains of the Jordan, and elsewhere in the north of Galilee, the majesty of that mountain imparts a portion of its own grandeur to the whole panorama.

Mount Hermon

UPPER PLAIN OF THE JORDAN & LAKE MEROM.

Tiberias *Magdala*

SEA OF GALILEE FROM SUPPOSED RUINS OF CAPERNAUM.

4.—LAKE MEROM.

THIS is deemed by some the Scriptural name for Lake Huleh, formerly called Julias, as already mentioned. It is a crystal sheet of water, at some seasons about seven miles in circuit, lying among the blue hills of Kades, or Kadesh. The olive and other trees abound in the neighbourhood; and the view upon the Jordan towards the Sea of Galilee is described as one of the most attractive in all the north of Palestine. The jessamine, the terebinth, and many flowering shrubs, combine to beautify the vicinity, or make the Upper Plains vie, in some places, with the Lower.

Though Lake Merom has been the scene of at least one great confederacy and one great battle (see Joshua xi. 5-7), our Engraving represents it in its natural and peaceful state, lonely and sequestered, surrounded at no great distance by lofty hills, among the rest by Mount Hermon, and far separated from all stirring scenes. On its margin at one place are seen corn-fields, and at another reed-jungles, the retreat of the wild-boar and other animals; while marshes, which it is not always easy to penetrate, render it difficult to present an exact topography of the Plain, except as it is seen from the adjacent mountains. The Jordan, however, as well as some other minor streams, falls into lake Merom, and hastens thence, an expanding current, to fall into the Sea of Galilee. Some are of opinion that three separate currents enter this lake; but the truth appears to be, that the Jordan is there only one stream, composed of the united waters of the Hasbeyiah, the Paneas, and the Tel-el-Kadi sources.

Not far from the margin of Merom, the Mohammedans have erected a Wali or temple to Joshua, in commemoration of his victory over the confederated kings. In the neighbourhood are

many traces of a former dense population; but the scene is one which prophecy bids us expect, and to which guilt is ever sure to lead. As a whole, it is gloomy and deserted.

But why this dreary depopulation? And how comes it to pass that a Mohammedan Wali disfigures the scene on which the blessing of God has been so often pronounced, in common with the whole land of Israel? Whence these foreign occupants of a country given to the Jews in many an inspired sentence, whose glowing language competes in beauty with the ancient loveliness of Palestine? All must be traced to the fact that Israel would none of God's counsel, or would not listen to his rebuke. All day long, for many weary centuries, he stretched out his hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people. At last, and to crown the whole, he said, "Surely they will reverence my Son," and sent him forth to work his works of mercy. But even "He came to his own, and his own received him not;" nay, when he held out his hand to bless them, they seized upon it, and nailed it to a tree. Hence the present misery of "the monumental people," and hence the sterility of their lovely land, trodden down as it is by the Gentiles. Just as our world was transformed into a vast sepulchre by sin, Palestine was blighted as if by the stroke of lightning, from the time that it crucified the Lord of glory. Yet are the Jews "beloved for the fathers' sakes;" and the world is a-tiptoe for the unrolling of the scroll which describes their mysterious future. The

"Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast"

will yet find rest under their own Messiah-king, when the margin of Merom will be vocal again with the shout of more than victory—when they shall "sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth."

5.—THE SEA OF GALILEE

Is the next sketch in our Panoramic View of the Jordan, and to catch some impression of its quiet beauty, we need only cast the eye over the Engraving. Its bays and promontories, its hills and dales—above all, its hallowed associations, combine to render this sheet of water and its shores one of the most attractive or most solemn scenes in the world. Lochlomond, Windermere, the lakes of Geneva, of Locarno, and others, have been mentioned, to convey, by comparison, some idea of this lake. But imagination loves to linger around it, indulging the feelings, now sad, now joyous, which it evokes, rather than circumscribing the wondrous scene by measurements and definitions.

Besides the name already mentioned, it is known as the Lake of Gennesareth and the Sea of Tiberias, from a city which stood on its western shore, named after the Roman emperor Tiberius. This lake is situated about thirteen miles south from Merom; and during the rainy season it receives many brooks or torrents from the adjoining hills. Its length, as now ascertained with considerable care, is about eleven or twelve geographical miles, and its breadth about half as much. Its waters are very clear and sweet, and abound in excellent fish of various kinds. When we call to mind the abundant population which occupied the banks of the lake, in the days of the Saviour's sojourn on earth, this will explain how not a few of the apostles earned a livelihood as fishermen in its waters; and though the borders of the Sea be now for the most part desolate and without an inhabitant, memory can easily people them with imperishable occupants. Even the life which is seen about this lake rather deepens than mars the solitude. Birds abound in some of the thickets; storks, wild ducks, and other aquatic fowls, frequent the waters; sometimes the vulture, and occasionally the eagle, may be seen amid the desolation—all rejoic-

ing in the loneliness which they love. Scarcely a boat now floats on the lake to disturb the calm; and the gentle gush of the waves, as they languidly break upon the beach, is often all that is heard by the visitor. "The saddened traveller," one has said, "may gaze for hours over the scene without observing a single human being, or indeed any living creature, save the large water-fowl, whose sole presence tends rather to increase than to diminish the desolation of the view."

But other thoughts arrest us by this lake. There lesson after lesson was taught, and wonder after wonder wrought, to lift man's thoughts to heaven. There God in very deed dwelt upon earth among men; and that one all-absorbing fact might supersede the necessity of every other association to invest the Sea of Galilee with ineffable attractions for the Christian's soul. Genius has described it, science has explored it, poetry has sung it, eloquence has dwelt in raptures on its beauty; but this one fact overshadows them all—the Son of God dwelt there, and there prepared to die for the sinful sons of men.

Yet the wonders which he wrought should not be so hastily passed over. By that Sea he dwelt, and wrought deliverances at once for the soul and the body. It is not the transparency of its waters—it is not the indescribable blending of tints upon its shores; it is such a fact as that Jesus here cast out the unclean spirit—here healed the sick of the palsy—here preached the gospel, not to the righteous, but to sinners—here said in accents such as heavenly love alone could dictate, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—it is these, and countless other facts, that explain the attractions of this lake. "Yes, thou lovely Lake of Galilee, though thy mountains are now barren, thy cities and thy villages in ruins, and thy fields and gardens desolate—though the fishermen have disappeared from thy waters, and the inhabitants fled from thy shores, yet these naked and scorched mountains, these solitary ruins, these waste fields, and that deserted sheet of water—all speak of peace to the wearied traveller."

When its waters were agitated, as they continue often to be, by a sudden tempest, the Prince of Peace once rebuked them, and there was a great calm; and the sight of them sleeping in their deep blue beauty produces effects somewhat similar in the meditative mind. Even though that serenity may be tinged with sadness, it seems all the more befitting a world where man's only sure portion is trouble—his only sure resting-place, a grave.

In Eden we see God and man estranged by a dire and a violent disruption, whose effects we hear in the groans, or witness in the tears, the agonies, and the deaths of a race. But by the shores of this lake the believer can trace the unfolding of the plan, or the progress of the work, by which God is to knit earth to heaven again, to "make an end of transgression," and fit his sons and his daughters for glory. The strains which hailed the new-born Redeemer—"Glory to God in the highest"—may be deepened and prolonged by the shores of Gennesareth. Reverberated from its mountains, they are circulating round the world; and happy is the soul which can hear—and hearing, believe. The calmest or the sunniest hour upon that Sea is but a feeble type of the blessedness of such a spirit.

It were idle to speculate here regarding the extraordinary phenomena, now ascertained beyond a doubt, which show that the waters of this lake are considerably depressed below the level of the sea. According to some, that depression amounts to nearly 330 feet. The Dead Sea, again, is 1311 feet below the level of the ocean, and we are at a loss to assign either a procuring or a final cause for the wonder. It is to be traced to some mighty convulsion in nature, affecting the contour, or what might be called the organic structure, of the country; but as our object in these brief sketches is truth, we need not indulge speculation instead. And however this is to be explained, the whole margin of the lake is inexpressibly melancholy. We might make the entire circuit, and not meet a solitary human being, except at the miserable town of Tiberias. The palms, the fig-trees, and oriental productions, have now disap-

peared, and an aspect of unutterable desolation deepens the sadness of a gloomy depopulation.

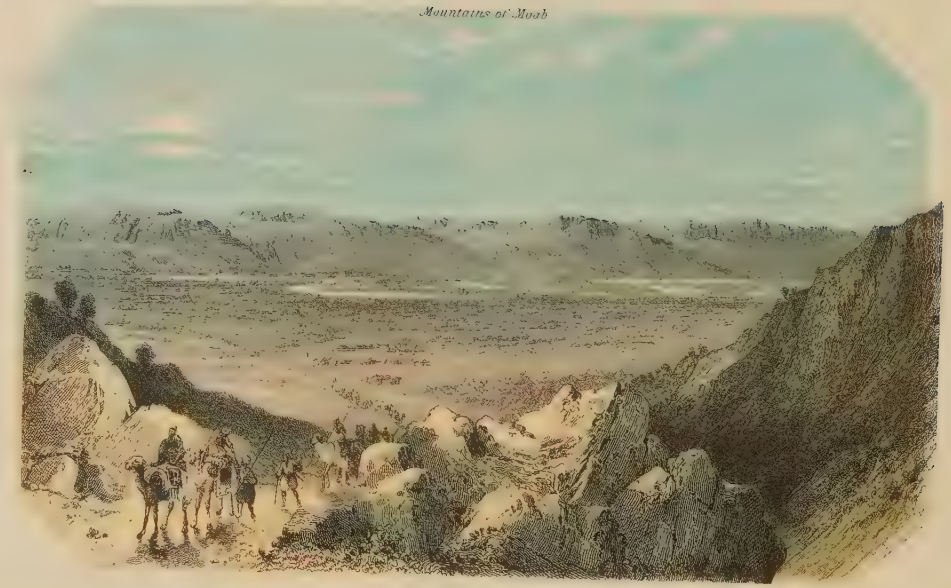
But Tiberias, which gives one of its names to this lake, deserves a more ample notice. We wave all discussions regarding Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, which stood in this neighbourhood, but have not yet been definitively identified, and pass on to say that Tiberias, Hebron, Saphet, and Jerusalem, are the four sacred cities of the Jews, near some one of which, multitudes from all lands desire to die and to be buried. The first mentioned town was built by Herod, and named, as we have seen, after Tiberius. As it was designed for a royal residence, it was adorned with royal magnificence; and the position of the ancient city, travellers say, may still be traced for a mile to the south of the modern town, by the fragments of granite columns, and other relics of ancient grandeur scattered over the place.

The modern city contains about 4000 inhabitants, one-fourth of whom are Jews. There are baths in the neighbourhood, and much that might render it a pleasant abode. Yet here, as elsewhere, a withering blight has fallen upon the scene, and Tiberias has been likened to "the habitation of the dead"—so little does man profit by

> "The various seasons woven into one,
> And that one season an eternal spring."

The space inclosed by the walls is not half covered with houses. Not a few of these are miserable huts; and imposing as the place may seem from a distance, it is in truth the abode of much squalid wretchedness, of filth and vermin. The climate is so warm, that many plants of the tropics would grow there, but the scanty produce of the deserted vicinity is only wheat, barley, and some less important plants.

The burial place at Tiberias is specially sacred, as attached to one of the "Holy Cities." A famous Jewish Rabbi lies interred there, and fourteen thousand of his scholars are said to be interred around him. Even in death the Jews are deluded.



PLAIN OF THE JORDAN FROM THE MOUNTAINS ABOVE JERICHO.

6.—THE PLAINS OF THE JORDAN.

THIS View represents one of the most extensive of all the prospects on the Jordan. The river has now reached its greatest magnitude, and begins to wind in many a link, like those of the Forth below Stirling, as if reluctant to be lost in such a receptacle as the Dead Sea. Much of the Plain is now sterile and desolate; but near the stream the vegetation, in many places, shows how fertile the region may have been, or may yet become, when the hand of industry shall irrigate and till it again. Mount Gilead and the plains of Moab on the east, and the hills of Jericho on the west, form the boundary of the view. "The Fords" lie in the foreground, and a hundred spots are visible which are inter-twined with the history of the chosen people. Their early wars with Moab—their miraculous passage of the river—the countless associations which are linked with Jericho—in short, a thousand events, from Moses to the Saviour, have happened on these Plains, every one of them affecting the destinies of men for ever, through that people, at once the most influential and the most despised—the most sinning, and yet the most signally defended of all the nations—the Jews.

But while we contemplate these Plains, whether historically, or in their natural beauty, perhaps everything connected with them should give precedence to the fact that somewhere along them the Hebrews crossed the Jordan, and entered the Promised Land. After eight and thirty years of wandering in the wilderness, they reached at last the margin of the stream. It is known to have been in spring, when the river begins to be in flood by the melting of the snows on Hermon and Lebanon. Yet, as soon as the ark of the covenant was borne by the priests to the stream, the waters divided, as the Red Sea had done, and gave a passage at once safe and free

to the weary yet exulting myriads of Israel.—It was a marvellous exodus that led them to the Red Sea, and now it is as marvellous an immigration that introduces them to Canaan. Enemies might be hovering around them, ready to sweep down and discomfit. A broad, deep, and rapid stream might appear to bar their entrance into Canaan—all might seem to disprove or thwart the promise. But the set time had arrived. Greater was He that was for them than all that could be against them—and the mighty host passed in safety into the Land of Promise, now become the land of possession. —We do not define this miracle as to its extent. Enough to know that the hand of God was there. The nations had forgotten Him, and multiplied idols like the sand upon the sea-shore. But to prevent the great I AM from being forgotten or unknown in His own world, miracle after miracle was wrought—nay, for a time, one of the nations of the earth enjoyed a miraculous existence—and the marvel which took place at the crossing of the Jordan was one of the most wondrous of them all. It at once poured contempt upon the gods of the blinded nations, and assured the children of Israel that the Lord their God was among them of a truth. Wondrous was the sight when, about the same spot, the Spirit of the Lord descended on the Saviour as a dove—but not less wonderful the interposition which carried thousands, nay millions, through "the flood" upon dry land.

Farther, upon these Plains and their fertility, many authors have lavished their eager eulogies. One man calls them a valley like a garden, containing 200,000 acres, and famous for its woods, especially its palm trees, and opobalsams. Josephus speaks in similar strains, and tells of the balsam, which is the most precious of all the fruits of the place. The air also is described as so genial that the inhabitants needed only garments of linen—it seemed, in truth, the garden of the Lord. But these and the other glories of the place have all departed, and one solitary palm is said now to stand in the Plains which once bore forests of that tree; thickets of thorns, and Riha, or Eriha, a sorry hamlet of Bedouins, form nearly all that remains

of Jericho—that region once teeming with life, fertility, and beauty, is now dreary, desolate, and mute. Yet its very silence is eloquent. It proclaims that the Holy One is true to his threats as well as to his promises; and no reflecting traveller can traverse the Plains without perceiving that they are now blighted and seared, in fulfilment of the saying, "They that are far off from God shall perish." They eloquently tell that

> "They who scorn the noon-day beam, perverse,
> Shall find the blessing, misimproved, a curse."

But we feel that we have failed even yet to convey a correct representation of the sterility of this scene. In some places, watercourses choked up are the occasions of fetid exhalations, and malaria; at others, drought parches, vegetation dies, and the land once flowing with milk and honey vies with the wilderness in barrenness. No roads deserving the name exist. At Beisan, that is Beth-Shan, where the bodies of Saul and his sons were ignominiously exposed after the battle of Gilboa, the desolation is intense. At other places rocks and barren mountains increase the dreariness of the waste: "For leagues together the eye looks in vain for a tree, or a human dwelling, or a trace of cultivation,—and it is absolutely a relief when night falls down, and the dark shadows of its blighted hills conceal the nakedness of its surface." Such, we repeat again, and again—such is the land that once flowed with milk and honey. Such are the wages of sin. Such is a beacon, of national dimensions, and burning for long dreary centuries, to warn us of the peril of having other gods before the true One.

One other Scriptural incident connected with the Plains has been mentioned. Eglon, King of Moab, in alliance with Ammon and Amalek, took Jericho, and, supported by 10,000 Moabites, kept Israel in subjection for eighteen years. But Ehud, a "left-handed Benjamite," at length smote the oppressor, and the deliverer's trumpet, heard on Mount Ephraim, roused the men of Israel boldly to emancipate their country, and sweep its tyrannical occupants away. Seizing upon the Fords, the children of Israel at once prevented

the 10,000 usurpers from escaping, and Moab from sending them assistance. The result was decisive: "Israel slew of Moab at that time 10,000 men, all lusty, and all men of valour, and there escaped not a man. . . . . And the land had rest forty years."

Perhaps the best spot from which to survey the Plains of the Jordan is the centre of the river, where the Ghor itself, and the country on either side are seen in full expanse. And those who have sailed down the stream have told us, in very glowing terms, of the peculiarities of these Plains. The river curves and twists to the north, the south, the east, and west, as if to "prolong its luxuriant meanderings in the calm and silent valley." Here and there spots of singular beauty are still seen on the banks. Numerous birds sing with a music strange and manifold,—and both the Flora and the Fauna of the place at once deepen the impressions, and sadden the soul. Nature, though it costs a struggle, still appears sometimes in beauty; and of the stream some have sung—

> "O sparkling clear thy waters glow,
> And murmur as they glide,
> To the fair trees which bend so low
> To kiss thy loving tide."

But from the whole the glory has departed, and a transformation from sunny fertility to dreary barrenness is presented, which only the Bible can explain.

FORDS OF THE JORDAN.

ENTRANCE OF THE JORDAN INTO THE DEAD SEA.

7.—FORDS OF THE JORDAN.

VARIOUS places are referred to in Scripture under this or synonymous titles, and modern travellers have forded the river at different points. Buckingham found it barely fordable about three miles below the Lake of Gennesareth, and there is a ford somewhat lower down the stream, where the waters are said to be shallower still. About twenty miles below the lake, there are several other fords. A little below Beisan, Captain Mangles says he found that the water in March reached to the belly of his horse; and Burckhardt, still farther down, found it to be nearly of the same depth in the midst of summer. It is obvious, however, in regard to such a stream as the Jordan, that its depth and volume must depend not merely upon the season, but upon the temperature and other considerations, which may vary from year to year.

But the Fords of the Jordan represented in our Engraving are peculiar in their kind. The spot where the Redeemer was baptized was an object of great attraction in early times. The Latin Church has selected one spot, and the Greek Church another, as their sacred scene, and contend, with an earnestness worthy of a better cause, for the pre-eminence of their favourite Ford. Each spot presents some of the most exquisite beauties of the river. The banks are fringed with tamarisks, willows, oleanders, and many luxuriant shrubs, and had not superstition blotted the beauty, it would have been one of the most lovely scenes in the East.

But besides the baptism of the Saviour, these Fords are deemed farther sacred, as the place at which, as we have just seen, the Hebrews miraculously crossed the Jordan to enter Canaan. Here again the Latin and the Greek Churches contend each for its own passage as the genuine one. Leaving them, however, to

adjust the controversy, we may allude to the annual concourse of pilgrims to these sacred scenes. The Greek Ford is the favourite; and an English traveller, a few years ago, saw 3000 pilgrims, and 2000 other visitors, assembled there. They spent the previous night in the neighbourhood of Jericho, and towards morning began to move in the direction of the Jordan, that they might reach it by sunrise. Oriental costumes of every hue—travellers on foot and travellers on horseback, on camels and on asses—soldiers, and civilians—men, women, and children—all joined in the cavalcade. They were preceded by torch-bearers with flambeaux, and escorted by Arab cavalry. The Greek Archbishop, and the Turkish Governor of the district, were there; and thus did the motley hordes press forward to wash in a stream which they idly supposed had some virtue to cleanse them from something more than the filth of the flesh. Amid the excitement of such a scene, many accidents every year occur. Some of the pilgrims are generally left dead upon the spot; and visitors come back to tell us that nothing is more remarkable among the devotees than their want of sympathy for the feeble and the suffering. A shout of laughter responds to the groans of the wounded; and it is made painfully plain that superstition has there accomplished its usual effects—it has hardened the heart, and made man more completely the enemy of man, "hateful and hating."

Having reached the margin of the Jordan, the pilgrims often rush wildly into the stream. The young and the old—some spontaneously, others with reluctance—some with a shout of joy, others with alarm—dip in the waters. Priests are there ready to sprinkle those who apply to them, and some of the pilgrims carry with them the cloth which is to form their winding-sheet, under the ignorant belief that when swathed in stuff so hallowed, the soul and the body are equally safe.—Some describe the scene at the Fords as an outrage upon modesty; and the superstition which pervades the ceremony is such as more and more degrades the devotees who trust to the Jordan for purity, instead of resorting to the open Fountain.

But passing from scenes so humbling, we should not fail to notice that it was in this neighbourhood that Gideon wrought his wonder, and won his victory with his 300 chosen men. The iniquities of Israel had brought misery and bondage upon them as of old. Their enemies had invaded their borders: famine soon followed; and the miserable inhabitants were compelled to flee to dens and caves of the earth. But a deliverer appeared in the person of Gideon, who proceeded to assail the Amalekites, the Midianites, and the other invaders of his country. His army of two and thirty thousand men were reduced by divine appointment to three hundred, "lest Israel should vaunt themselves against Jehovah, and say, Mine own hand hath saved me." With his handful of men, then, Gideon acted against the Midianites, who "lay in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude," and by a simple stratagem, by the sound of trumpets, by breaking the pitchers, and displaying the lights, which each man bore, the swarming hosts were first startled, then routed, and 120,000 of the invaders fell. The Fords of the Jordan were seized by the men of Ephraim, who "took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan;" and aided by the men of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh, the victory of Gideon was complete. He passed the river, "faint, yet pursuing" (Judges viii. 4), and thus set an example to believers in every age never to desist from the pursuit or assault of spiritual enemies, however feeble, or timid, or dejected we may seem. The God who fought for the chosen people on that day is still the Friend—may we not say the Ally?—of all who place their trust in him; and on the battle-field against the Midianites by the Fords of the Jordan, as well as a thousand other places, he says, "The Lord keepeth that man in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on him, because he trusteth in him." He encourages us to "trust in the Lord, and not be afraid."

As we wander among these tranquil scenes—tranquil, at least, when man is absent—we can scarcely help recollecting how often the serenity of nature has been disturbed by the lawless outbreaks of man. Here the river has often ran red with blood, and been

impeded by heaps of the slain. Here the Gileadite slew the Ephraimite, and the Ephraimite the Gileadite, till the dead were counted by tens of thousands. On these banks, and by these fords, the mode of uttering a single letter of the Hebrew alphabet—Sibboleth, instead of Shibboleth—has been the occasion of death to multitudes. In spite of miracles the most amazing, and mercies embodying the very affluence of Heaven, man continued man, self-willed, untamed, ungodly. Were it true that any scenes in nature, or any mercies in Providence, could win men to the love of God, his mercies enjoyed along the stream of the Jordan might have led to that result. But it is not mercies in Providence—it is not a beauteous landscape—it is omnipotent grace alone that can make man like his God again; and till that power be put forth, all is as deceptive as the mirage of the desert—as transient as a writing upon sand. It forms one sure proof that the Bible is from God, to discover that nothing but its truth received into the heart, enshrined there, and obeyed in the life, can either lift up the degraded, or purify the polluted.

8.—ENTRANCE OF THE JORDAN INTO THE DEAD SEA.

The valley of the Jordan, or the Ghor, is about sixty miles in length, by an average of six or seven in breadth, though it differs, of course, at different points. When the river leaves the Lake of Gennesareth, it is about forty feet in width; its current abounds in rapids, and near the entrance of the Yarmak into the Jordan, there is a cascade in the latter about eleven feet in height. Twenty-seven dangerous rapids have been counted in the course of the stream, besides others of smaller size. At some places the river is divided by little islands; and the navigation, as was proved by the boats of the American Exploring Expedition in 1848, is attended with no common danger.

Though the distance from the Lake of Gennesareth to the Dead Sea be only about sixty miles in a straight line, yet, owing to the windings of the stream, the course by water is scarcely less than 200 miles. Its average depth is computed to be about nine feet; and its banks, now precipitous, now level, now covered with shrubs or trees and fragrant flowers, now dreary and treeless, offer great varieties of view. And before the stream reaches the Dead Sea, the valley, as we have seen, opens out into the plains of Jericho on the right bank, and those of Moab on the left. As it approaches the great reservoir, a luxuriant vegetation affords a shelter for many wild animals, and hence the Scriptural account of some of these, when dislodged from their fastnesses by inundations—"Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swellings of Jordan." But the visitor is prompted again and again to ask, Where now are the honey, the opobalsam, and the teeming abundance of the plain of Jericho? The region was once called "the divine;" it is now

blighted and black. Here, at least, the "whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain."

At a spot indicated on the left of our View by a ruin, stood Jericho of old; at least that is one of the sites to which travellers point as probably the spot occupied by that city. It stood in the plain, not far from the entrance of the Jordan into the Dead Sea, and was early taken by the Israelites. It was called, "the City of palm-trees;" and some accounts of the place indicate a richness and fertility such as few lands except Palestine could show. But the indolence and the wretchedness of the inhabitants are such, that dreary sterility now reigns ascendant. What though Anthony and Cleopatra once owned the spot? Or what though Herod the Great here displayed both his magnificent conceptions and his ferocious cruelty? Nay, what though it was here that the Saviour visited Zaccheus, and brought salvation to the publican's house? The glory has departed from Jericho as from a thousand other scenes, and the time has been when not even a hut told where it had stood. Under the Saracens it revived for a time, and by means of aqueducts and irrigation, the place became fertile once more. But a village called "the meanest and foulest in Palestine," is nearly all that remains to tell where Jericho once stood.

Yet a grove in the vicinity of Riha might give the sickly and squalid inhabitants a hint as to improving their condition. A fountain supplies the roots of the trees with water, and they spring up like willows by the water-courses. "The fountain of Elias" is near Jericho, and travellers, on apparently good grounds, are disposed to regard this as the scene of Elisha's miracle (2 Kings ii. 21).

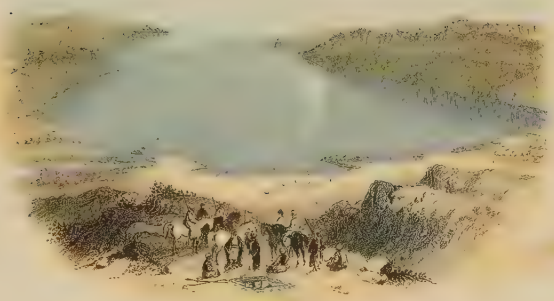
For the last few miles of its course, the Jordan runs between banks of sand; and where it enters the Dead Sea it is deep, turbid, and rapid, with a width of about 100 yards. Though the fabulous accounts, which were formerly current regarding that Sea, be now to a great extent set aside, there is still enough to awe a meditative mind, along its wild and sterile shores. The very fact that it has no outlet seems of itself a kind of mystery. Its ascertained

depression of above 1300 feet below the level of the ocean is another wonder. Then the farther fact that on its margin once stood the fated cities of the plain, now buried beneath its waters, invests the lake with additional interest. Here Abraham and Lot once dwelt, and here manifestations of holy justice, second only to those of the Deluge, were made. The bottom of the Dead Sea is ascertained to consist of two separate plains, of different depths; and science, founding upon that fact, accounts for the desolation of Sodom and Gomorrah by a tremendous convulsion of nature taking place at the fiat of the Holy One. In short, of all the spots on earth, the margin of this Sea awakens among the deepest memories. Eden, did we know it, would be solemnly sacred—Ararat, like some lofty tribunal, speaks of retributive justice—Sinai has associations which can scarcely be rivalled—Calvary speaks to all mankind, and will speak to all eternity. But the Dead Sea—the grave of Sodom and Gomorrah—speaks in tones well nigh as deep regarding Him who exacts the wages of sin. It warns mankind to pause on the way to ruin.

Having seen this river arrive at its mysterious receptacle, we can scarcely help glancing back over its two hundred miles of length, and recollecting that no where in all the world have the same wonders been crowded into the same space. The Euphrates has witnessed surprising revolutions—it has seen the extremes of mortal grandeur and of mortal desolation. The Tigris has matched the Euphrates in this; for if the Babylon of the one rivalled the Nineveh of the other in magnitude, in riches, and in guilt, have they not also been rivals in their terrible overthrow? Again, the rivers of the Western world roll, in floods like seas, through scenes of grandeur with which the Old World has nothing to cope. But none of these rivers gather around them the charms which attach to every inch of the margins of the Jordan. There the Son of God has lived. There miracle has been heaped on miracle. There heaven and earth have met. How blessed, then, could we learn beside that stream to prepare for the Jeru-

salem which is above, the streams which gladden the city of our God!

Again, we have seen that the Jordan loses itself in the Dead Sea—and it is literally lost. There is no visible outlet. Its volume never imparts freshness to those acrid waters. There is no life in that sea, and whatever the river washes into it, finds there but a watery grave. And O how like is this to the soul of man, receiving blessing upon blessing from God on high, yet returning none! From moment to moment, these blessings come, and might array us in the beauties of holiness; but all continues sterile, and will continue so, till He come who proclaims in the multitude of his mercies, and the depths of his wisdom, "Behold, I make all things new."



THE DEAD SEA FROM THE NORTH.

THE PILLAR OF USDUM.

9.—THE DEAD SEA—THE PILLAR OF USDUM.

In addition to the other objects of interest associated with the Dead Sea, we are to remember that it was here that Lot's wife suffered for her longing, lingering look upon the ill-fated cities. It is now generally admitted that the bay which forms the southern extremity most probably covers their site. That bay is separated by a bank, which runs nearly across the lake, from the upper and the larger portion; and few who examine the place now question the supposition that where the waters of the bay now lie, Sodom and Gomorrah once stood. There lay the fertile plain of Sodom, preferred by Lot when Abraham gave him his choice of a region to dwell in, and there was the wrath of God poured forth on the guilty Sodomites—at once a type and a rehearsal of the great catastrophe which is to wind up the history of our world as to its probationary condition.

But discoveries have lately been made on the margin of these sullen waters which seem to some to connect the past with the present by a visible tie. When the American Exploring Expedition visited the Dead Sea, some of the party discovered, on the western side of the southern bay, an object which they have described with great exactness, and which is represented in our View. To the east of Jebel-Usdum (Sodom)—they saw a lofty pillar, standing apparently detached from the general mass of the insulated mountain. When closely examined, it was found to be formed of solid salt, capped with carbonate of lime. The upper and rounded part is about forty feet high, and rests on a kind of oval pedestal, from forty to sixty feet above the level of the sea. The pillar is described as "one mass of crystallization."

Now, we are far from saying that this is the pillar mentioned in

Scripture in connection with the destruction of Sodom and the flight of Lot. But standing as it does amid a scene of unmitigated desolation, it is suggestive of many solemn truths. On one side rises the salt mountain of Usdum, on the other are the barren and lofty cliffs of Moab, where Lot found a shelter. Then in the foreground lies the lake, mysterious in itself, and rendered still more solemnising by the wonders which have been witnessed on its margin; and all these combined, place the pillar among the most instructive sights which that land of marvels supplies. The utter sterility which reigned around told the American strangers how terrible and how perfect was the overthrow of the Cities of the Plain. The place is not merely sowed with salt,—it is turned into salt itself, and the curse of perpetual sterility is thus inwoven with the very nature of the soil.

The wonders of this Sea have been often told, but it is interesting still. Dismissing the fables of antiquity, and adhering only to physical or ascertained fact, we observe that it is about fifty English miles in length, and twelve in breadth. Dark and precipitous mountains inclose it on the east—on the western shore the mountains of Judea reach a height of about 1500 feet—on the opposite side those of Moab ascend to 2000 or 2500—on the north its limit is the plain of Jericho, while the desert of Edom lies at its southern termination. "The mountains are for the most part barren. The waters are bitter beyond expression, and so dense, that one can sit, lie, read, or even sleep," says Stephens, "without danger, on the surface of that salt Sea." The air above the Sea is generally clear. The evaporation is copious; the heat is at seasons stifling; and were there room for much vegetation on the shore, it must be that of the densest jungle. A bright phosphorescent light illuminates the waters at night, and everything betokens the presence, either formerly or now, of subterranean fires, and strong igneous action. Though it be fabulous that birds cannot fly across the Sea, no traces of life are found in its waters. The fishes of the Jordan perish when they enter there, and, under the most powerful microscopes,

no animalculæ have been detected. The depth varies from thirteen feet to thirteen hundred. The bottom, as we have mentioned, is ascertained to consist of two submerged plains; and the lake is pervaded, from north to south, by a deep ravine, corresponding to the bed of the Jordan, and supposed to have once been its channel.

As it is now settled, with very considerable certainty, that Sodom and Gomorrah stood near the southern extremity, our Engraving leads us thither. Unless we could discover Calvary with certainty, or actually "see the place where the Lord lay," scarcely another spot on earth could be named so saddening as the shores of this dreary lake.

Were the traveller anxious to gain a view of the Dead Sea, through all its length, at a single glance, he might be indulged by climbing the mountain of Quarantania, near Jericho, one of the most precipitous of all that bound the Ghor. It is a wild and stern scene, and has long been regarded, by tradition at least, as the "exceeding high mountain" to which Satan led the Saviour, during his mysterious temptation. The ascent is so difficult, that it is rarely attempted. Hermits have dug their cells at some places on the slopes; and the view over Gilead, Ammon, Moab, the Dead Sea, and other Scriptural scenes, well repays the ascent. Milton has seized upon it to adorn his poetry, or employed his poetry to deepen the impressions of the spot, when he says of this View—

> "Fertile of corn the glebe, of oil, and wine;
> With herds the pastures thronged, with flocks the hills."

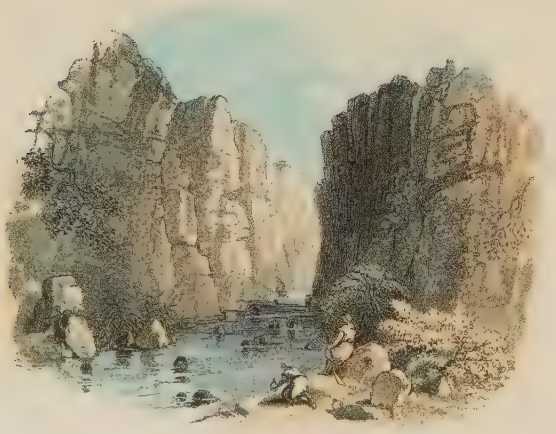
But assuming the truth of the tradition, the Christian wayfarer will find here something more impressive than even lofty mountains or luxuriant valleys. Here the Lion of the tribe of Judah foiled the Destroyer; here he proved the omnipotence of truth; and here he taught all the tempted where to find a defence.

Having thus traced the Jordan, from its fountain at Hasbeyiah till it is finally lost in the mysterious Sea, one reflection may close the whole. A river traced from its embochure upward to its foun-

tain, is no unmeet emblem of the human religions, or of false aspects and corruptions of the true. Thus traced upward, they diminish at every winding. If at some places they appear to deepen and expand, it is only to be speedily lost in some marsh; and when their course is traced nearer and nearer to their source, they become small by degrees, till at last they utterly disappear. These religions sink into the earth, out of which they arose, as all earthly things are destined to do.

But a river traced from its fountainhead downward to the sea, is as meet an emblem of the one divine religion, whether we regard its course through the world, or through an individual soul. So small at its commencement, that a little child can bound over it in sport, it widens and deepens as it flows. Its margins become fringed with beauty. It spreads fertility and verdure all around; and though it may at times, like the Jordan, be narrowed by rocks into a rapid, or dwindle in drought into a feeble stream, or dash at other times over cataracts, nay, even run under ground, like the Jabbok, it is still upon the whole expanding, till at last that river could perhaps bear upon its bosom the wealth of half a world, or float in safety the navies of an empire. He whom Heaven makes wise, will surely hasten to make a selection between these two.

THE SOURCE OF THE JABBOK.



MOUTH OF THE ARNON.

10.—THE ARNON.

This river, now called Majeb, rises among the mountains to the east of the Dead Sea, and has a circuitous course of about eighty miles. It separated the land of Moab from the lot of Reuben, and flows through gorges of wild sublimity, where only a few willows and similar shrubs can clamber. At certain seasons of the year, the waters rush through some of the defiles with such impetuosity as to carry down large blocks of stone, and deposit them at places to which nothing but such a resistless power could raise them. "When viewed from above," Burckhardt says, "the valley of the Arnon looks like a deep chasm, formed by some tremendous convulsion of the earth, into which there seems no possibility of descending to the bottom. The distance from the edge of one precipice to that of the opposite one is about two miles in a straight line." It took that traveller five-and-thirty minutes to scramble down the banks; and the heat in the dell was found to be suffocating.

Near its embochure into the Dead Sea, the Arnon becomes still more wild and impetuous. The gorge, formed by nearly perpendicular rocks, and represented in our View, is there about a hundred feet wide; the river itself is about eighty-five feet, and four feet deep, and the effects of the swollen torrent are such that figures the most fantastic are scooped out or worn upon the banks, which some have found it difficult to regard as aught else than works of art. Amid such wild and such fantastic sights, the traveller is ever and anon pointed to that Power which originated all, which sustains all, and which gives law to all; and the picturesque language

of Gray, when describing the Great Chartreuse, becomes not less applicable to the banks of the Arnon :—

> " Presentiorem et conspicimus Deum,
> Per invias rupes, fera per juga,
> Clivosque preruptos, sonantes
> Inter aquas, nemorumque noctem."

The country watered by the Arnon was not included in the grant to the Children of Israel. It was in that country, however, that they first did battle, and began to take possession of their heritage—from the Arnon to the Jabbok. Aroer stood on the banks of the former, and was a place of some importance and strength. But it was doomed, and its glory in due time departed —the saying was literally fulfilled, " As a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the Fords of Arnon."

Merely to say, however, that Aroer stood on the banks of the Arnon is far to understate the ancient condition of that stream. The ruins of Eleale, Heshbon, Meon, Medaba, Dibon, and other towns, have been found on the north of the Arnon. To the south, those of Rabbath-Moab, Kir-Moab, and others, are indicated—all displaying, upon a scale which surprises us the more, the longer we explore the land, both the ancient resources and the modern desolation of those countries. It appears as if the Omnipotent were ever present there, appealing to his doings in confirmation of his word. Scepticism may thus be silenced, and faith more and more reinforced. Servetus at the time of the Reformation, and Volney, Voltaire, and others since then, may have deemed the present state of Palestine a refutation of the Scriptures ; but the wish was father to the thought. Next to the condition of the Jews themselves, the condition of their much-loved land both corroborates and explains the truth of God.

11.—THE JABBOK.

THIS river, which is first mentioned in Genesis xxxii. 22, is now called the Zerka. It rises among the Hauran mountains, and, after a course of nearly sixty-five miles, falls into the Jordan, about thirty miles below the Lake of Tiberias. It thus carries the waters of Gilead to that river; but the stream is of very unequal size, and even of different lengths, at different periods of the year, while at some places it disappears, and runs underground. During part of its course, it flows through an arid desert, and scarcely seems at all to redeem the sterility. In Gilead, however, the Jabbok runs between lofty precipices, some of which are not less than five hundred feet high. The scenery there is wild and picturesque: at some places it approaches the grand; for the mountains appear to have been cleft in two to the width of about one hundred yards, to admit of a channel for the stream, which is there about ten yards wide. Its margin is fringed with oleander and plane trees, with wild olives, and wild almonds, and with reeds which sometimes reach the height of fifteen feet, so that the river steals along, heard, but not beheld, by those who have found their way—no easy task—into the ravine where it flows. If to all this we add the songs of the birds which frequent the thickets of Gilead, and the groves where even the sun cannot penetrate, we have a scene of Oriental richness, which, at some seasons at least, would delight not merely an eastern eye, but even those who are accustomed to the copious rivers of far moister climates. Wood-pigeons, partridges, and other birds, abound near the Jabbok; and even though we make some allowance for the fancy of travellers, excited by spectacles which are somewhat uncommon, enough remains to render

some portions of the scenery on that river worthy of the "delightsome land."

What has been said of the Arnon, regarding the populous cities which lay near it, might here be repeated regarding the Jabbok. We might mention Peniel, for example (Gen. xxxii. 24-30), where the Gadites built a city, Penuel, which Gideon destroyed (Judges viii. 8, 17), and Jeroboam rebuilt (1 Kings xii. 25). Or we might instance Ramoth-Gilead, where Jehoram king of Judah was dangerously wounded, where Jehu was made king of Israel (2 Kings ix. 13), and where Ahab was slain in battle by the Syrians (2 Chron. xviii. 34). But let it suffice to point to Bozrah, the capital of Edom, once a queen among cities, but now another scene of sad and inexpressible desolation. Once famous for its vineyards, scarcely a tree can now be seen in the vicinity. Once the marketplace of Syria, of Irak, and the Hedjaz, it is now the abode of "a mere handful, almost lost in the maze of ruins." It was the oath of Jehovah, "I have sworn by myself that Bozrah shall become a desolation and reproach, a waste and a curse, and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes" (Jer. xlix. 13). Such was the prediction; and what of the fulfilment? Lord Lindsay replies—"Bozrah is now, for the most part, a heap of ruins, a most dreary spectacle. Here and there, the direction of a street or alley is discernible, but that is all." Neither Roman, nor Christian, nor Saracen, nor Turk, could turn aside the purposes of the Supreme.

It was somewhere on the banks of the Jabbok that Jacob met Esau, after a long separation, following the fraudulent obtaining of the paternal blessing. Near a ford in the brook (Gen. xxxii. 22, 23) their interview took place, and in the same neighbourhood did Jacob wrestle with a mightier than his brother—the Angel of the Covenant. Moreover, the brook Jabbok was the boundary between the tribe of Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh. It is no unmeet representative of the rivers of Palestine, with margins now sterile, now luxuriantly clothed with verdure—as in our View—at one place monotonous and tame, at another hemmed in by

precipices, or shaded by vegetation, which even the sun of Syria cannot penetrate.

But if we be in quest of spiritual as well as material beauty in such scenes, we should notice more at length how Jacob pled here, when he met his injured brother. He first took all prudent precautions to avert Esau's displeasure, and then retired into some recess among these overhanging cliffs to pour out his soul before his God. Now, never had man a grander oratory! Never a more direct or undisturbed access to the throne of the skies! And what a prayer! Jacob among the rocks of the Jabbok, and the contrite, troubled sinner, now urge the same plea, and make the same confession—"I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant. . . . . But *Thou saidst*, I will surely do thee good." It is the promise of God, then, that gives hope to the suppliant, even while contrition lays him in the dust. "In his word do I hope."

And *that* prayer prevailed. The Angel of the Covenant was there. The patriarch pled and wrestled. His cry was, "Except thou bless me, I will not let thee go," and he was blessed. Jacob became Israel—that is, "a Prince of God, for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Genesis xxxii. 28).

And when was it otherwise? It is written, "Ask and ye shall receive;" and who ever obeyed the command and was disappointed in the promise? We read, "Seek and ye shall find," and does not the scene on the banks of the Jabbok at once re-echo and enforce the assurance? That river carries to the Jordan the waters of Gilead from its dark and deep ravines; but the doings enacted on its margin have wafted far farther the gladdening assurance that God is the hearer and the answerer of prayer. He gives peace, and who can occasion trouble? Esau shall greet Jacob with a brother's welcome, when Jehovah gives the command.

We have seen that the Jabbok carries the waters of Gilead to the Jordan; and also that at some places there are spots of great

beauty there. But at other places the district is characterized by more than common sterility, and such things have deepened the wonder of some visitors to those scenes. Men may decay, or cities may be laid in ruins—habits may change, or one people may be supplanted by another; but how does it happen that a dreary barrenness has taken the place of all but proverbial productiveness? What is it that has furnished so melancholy a reply to the question, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" It seems as if changes so radical and so lasting could be ascribed with truth only to that right hand which is omnipotent. The country was originally "a place for cattle" (Numbers xxxii. 1); and it was yet more remarkable for its balm, and richly aromatic productions. From the report of travellers, we may infer that the original peculiarity of Gilead could without much difficulty be restored; but meanwhile it is dreary and waste—a whole territory in ruins—where many things occur to proclaim that it is peeled and bare, exactly in terms of the forewarnings given by Him who sees the end from the beginning. Astronomy tells us of the terrible desolation which would instantly sweep over our globe, were the inclination of the earth's axis to be altered even in a slight degree; and the traveller in Palestine is sometimes tempted to think that that catastrophe has happened there.

FORDS OF THE KISHON.

12.—THE FORDS OF THE KISHON.

According to some authors the Kishon, now the Mukutta, rises in Mount Tabor, but according to others, on the slopes of Carmel. It is probable that its waters may be drawn from both sources; but as one branch may be dried up during summer, while the other is perennial, conflicting accounts may hence have arisen. In either case, however, the course of the stream is short, and does not exceed seven or eight miles from its rise till it falls into the Bay of Acre. It waters part of the plain of Esdraelon, or Jezreel, famed alike for its unstinted fertility, and as the field of many battles both in ancient and modern times. It was by the overflowings of the Kishon, above the Fords, that the army of Sisera was swept away (Judges iv. 13; v. 21); and a similar event happened during the French invasion of Palestine, about the end of the last century. But at other seasons of the year, the stream is so small that it never reaches the sea, except as it is filtered through a bank of sand at its mouth, though it sometimes requires to be crossed in a boat, when it is at once wide, deep, and rapid. There are some dangerous quicksands near its embochure.

Besides the overthrow of Sisera's army, amid the inundations of the Kishon, when Deborah and Barak could sing, "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river of Kishon," another memorable event is recorded in Scripture as having happened there. After the contest between Elijah on the Lord's side, and four hundred and fifty priests of Baal on his, with the victory which followed, the vanquished priests were slain by the prophet "by the brook Kishon." Carmel had beheld the contest and the victory. All its echoes had been waked by the shout of the people proclaiming, "Jehovah, he is the God! Jehovah, he is the God!" and after

that, Justice, stern, inflexible, appalling, demanded a sacrifice such as may not be offered now. But, oh, how strangely does the quiet beauty of the scene, as we gaze upon it from the ridge of Carmel, contrast with that deed of blood—that punishment inflicted for a God dishonoured, and a whole people deceived (1 Kings xviii. 40).

The course of the Kishon is one of singular beauty, as our View betokens. It skirts the Carmel range. It is in the neighbourhood of Tabor, and the heights which bound the plain of Esdraelon are all in view. The mountains of Gilead, Little Hermon and Gilboa, with the hills of Samaria, surround the scene. Altogether it is majestic; and as every spot—for example, Endor and Nain—is consecrated by the memory of some marvel, the neighbourhood of the Kishon is one of the most interesting in the Holy Land.

We have referred, in this section, to the plain of Esdraelon, and this magnificent plain, which extends about thirty miles from east to west, and is about eighteen miles at its greatest breadth, is one of the wonders of Palestine. Viewed historically, it has been the scene of battles which have decided the destiny of nations, and some of the most stirring events of the Jewish nation took place upon it. Viewed in regard to aspect or scenery, both itself and its environs are such as only Palestine—a land where every spot, every town, every village, almost every rock, has a history—could supply; and viewed as a portion of the "land flowing with milk and honey," the great plain of Jezreel (the same as Esdraelon) might furnish the granaries which contained the food of millions. Miserable as its modern culture is, and wretched as are the down-trodden fellahs who till it, the wheat and other crops which it produces in patches, even when only the surface of the earth has been scratched, amaze those who are accustomed to see more meagre grain wrung from less prolific soils by utmost skill, and persevering labour. We only add that this "battle ground of the nations" has been wet with the blood of Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, and Crusaders. Persians, Egyptians, Druses, Turks, and Arabs, have united with the Western nations to prolong the celebrity of the place, and decide their

contests here. Prophecy, moreover, points to Esdraelon, as many think, under the name of Armageddon—the destined scene of the last great conflict of all—so that the past, the present, and the future, seem all to fasten our thoughts on this majestic plain. It is now scathed and withered by the curse of God, but it will put on its beauty again, when the set time has come. It is not so much a tomb as a place of rest, and great things may yet be accomplished there when the Lord shall arise to "make a short work on the earth," and when one year shall do the work of a thousand.

But, again, no one who even glances at the present state of the Holy Land can fail to notice how it is everywhere scarred and defaced by the curse pronounced upon it for the sins of its people. And the blighting influence of its woe is very distinctly seen in Esdraelon. Though a garden for fertility, and wrapping up in its capacious bosom enough to aliment whole tribes, it is, as we have seen, for the most part waste and sterile. A divine sentence has gone forth against it, and the fruitful place has become a wilderness. "It is a solitude," says one traveller, and another re-echoes the saying. "It is almost entirely deserted," writes an exact observer. "It is very fertile, but uncultivated," adds another; and yet another significantly says, "The Arabs sometimes fight their battles there." In brief, we may mourn for the vanished fertility of Jezreel, as Israel mourned for the good King Josiah who fell in battle upon that plain, and of whom we read that "all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah."

Now whence this long desolation? We speak of Esdraelon as a specimen of the Holy Land so peeled and blasted through all its borders, and ask, why this long night, this dreary winter, in a region proverbial once for its exuberance? The same sun shines above it. The blue firmament still sheds down its dew. The Kishon still rolls to the sea. Esdraelon, in short, spreads out its bosom to the sky just where it lay eighteen centuries ago. Whence then this treeless, sometimes leafless vista? Its bosom once waved with yellow corn. It was studded with towns and villages, each engirdled by

vineyards, or shaded by olive and orange trees,—but now, all is blank, dreary, saddening. Why? Because the curse of God is pressing on the land, because it forsook the Holy One of Israel, and "would none of Him." For many generations he bore with the people,—his repentings were kindled, he could not give them up. But, at length, their cup was full, and He made them as Admah, He set them as Zeboim. As God had blessed Israel as He never blessed any other people, the abuse of their blessings turned them into curses, and now the land is desolate,—even Esdraelon is a waste.

Nor is it only when we look at Judea as a whole, that these impressions are forced upon the mind. In individual cases, from the monarch to the menial, we know that transgression was rife. Think of Saul, for example, hurrying away to Endor, on the borders of Jezreel. He is in trouble, and his dark soul precipitates itself upon heavier trouble still, by the unhallowed paths which he pursues. He turns from the living God to consult an impostor, and that against the prohibition which forbade an appeal to those "who peep or who mutter." Yet why concentrate our accusation upon Saul? Is not every man in spirit doing the same, who turns from the Oracles of the living God to consult, in preference, the wisdom of the world—to imbibe its spirit, and to copy its models? What is many a German critic, or many a learned commentator engaged in, but just appealing to human imposture instead of Eternal Truth?

SOUK BARRADA

THE BARRADA AT DAMASCUS.

SYRIA.

VIEWS ON THE BARRADA.

1.—SOUK BARRADA.

THE present View represents a scene on the Barrada, which is regarded as either the Abana or the Pharpar of Scripture, most probably the latter, and the scenery, as well as the associations of the river, increases our wonder that men have lingered so long in the West for beauty, instead of going forth as many now do, to the East, in quest of the majestic in mountains, or the beautiful in valleys, as well as the profound or the awful in moral association.

About seven hours from Damascus is the pleasant village of Ain Fijji, situated near the extremity of a fertile dale, and washed by a river, which Carne says is one of the coolest in the world. It issues from a limestone rock, a deep and rapid stream, about thirty feet wide; but its course is only about one hundred yards, when it falls into the Barrada. That short-lived river, we may mention, is by some reckoned the Abana of the Bible; and if so, the admiration of Naaman was well-founded. The stream rushes out from under the ruins of a temple, but whether erected by a heathen to his god, or by a Christian to his, travellers are not agreed. Where the Abana, if it be the Abana, falls into the Barrada, the mountains, on each bank of that river, approach so closely as almost to meet. The road becomes a narrow path, while on high, in the face of the natural escarpment, excavations are made, which appear to be inaccessible, except by scaling-ladders from below, or a rope and basket from above. The exterior of these aerial abodes is in some cases ornamented with statues, and other decorations; and where the Barrada is crossed by a bridge, as represented in our Engraving, the whole

scene is one of mingled wildness, grandeur, and beauty. Fruit-trees abound in the vicinity. Wheat and maize are sown wherever there is space for that purpose, and the pass of Souk Barrada is one where travellers love to linger—where they often pitch their tent, or where the memorials of the past, and the marvels of the present, are alike to be enjoyed. Here, according to Syrian traditions, Abel the son of Adam was interred, and a hill in the neighbourhood is still named Nabi-Habil. Traces of Roman power, in the form of Imperial inscriptions, are abundant even in this sequestered valley.

The waters of the river are here rapid and clear. Traced downward, they conduct to Damascus, with its cincture of gardens and evergreen fertility; traced upward, they conduct to the district of Zebdané, "a picturesque and cool retreat, flourishing as with the richest English cultivation, shaded roads, rose-covered hedges, delicious pastures, the people friendly and hospitable, clean in their dwellings, and comely in their appearance."

Amid this beauty, the village of Souk is signalized. Its houses, each a model of neatness, adorn the slopes of the surrounding hills, and seem to be the abodes rather "of little landed proprietors than of needy peasants." Add to these general attractions the fact that the vale of Souk abounds in vineyards—that it has been for many generations presided over by a race of patriarchal and public-spirited Sheiks—that it is highly salubrious—and that the Barrada abounds in fish; and with these things before us, we seem to have the materials of a happy valley indeed. Amid such multiform beauties, we might suppose that we had found the retreat of innocence at length, could we forget that man is everywhere and always man, and that nothing but the truth of God can render him aught but degraded and woe-worn.

2.—THE BARRADA AT DAMASCUS,

AND OTHER RIVERS OF SYRIA.

Damascus claims to be the oldest city in the world. The Orientals call it "a pearl surrounded by emeralds." Julian the Apostate said concerning it—"The great and sacred Damascus surpasses every city, both in the beauty of its temples and the magnitude of its shrines, as well as the timeliness of its seasons, the limpidness of its fountains, the volume of its waters, and the richness of its soil."

The plain of Damascus owes its fertility chiefly to the Barrada, which flows in its neighbourhood, in five or six channels, and which has turned the whole vicinity into a garden, or an emerald, upon which every traveller delights to dilate, while some, like Lamartine, draw upon Oriental phraseology for language to embody their impressions. As we have just seen, the Barrada is by some deemed the Abana, by others the Pharpar, mentioned in the Second Book of Kings. But taking the Barrada, the ancient Chrysorrhoas, just as it flows at this day, we find it divided into three channels, as soon as it issues from the gorge of the Anti-Lebanon mountains. The principal stream runs straight to Damascus, to supply the fountains, baths, and public cisterns. The other streams, diverging in opposite directions, furnish the means of a copious irrigation, and prevent that sterility from reigning around the city which does reign outside their influence.

It is thus that Addison describes the beauties through which the Barrada flows, and part of which our Engraving represents. "We were looking down," he says, "from an elevation of a thousand feet, upon a vast plain, bordered in the distance by blue mountains, and occupied by a rich luxuriant forest of the walnut, the fig, the

pomegranate, the plum, the apricot, the citron, the locust-tree, the pear, and the apple, forming a waving grove of more than fifty miles in circuit; possessing a vast variety of tint, a peculiar density and luxuriance of foliage, and a wildly picturesque form, from the branches of the loftier trees throwing themselves up above a rich underwood of pomegranates, citrons, and oranges, with their yellow, green, and brown leaves; and then conceive our sensations to see gradually rising in the distance above this vast superficies of rich luxuriant foliage, the swelling leaden domes, the gilded crescents, and the marble minarets of Damascus; while in the centre of all, winding towards the city, ran the main stream of the river Barrada. As we descended, here and there the openings of the trees displayed little patches of green verdure, or a glimpse of richly cultivated gardens: the whole of the rich tract was surrounded by a mud wall, beyond which all was arid desert."

But we may linger here for a little to find other associations with the Barrada—that is, the Abana or the Pharpar—besides those which originate in natural beauty. The stream, we have seen, renders all around it like one emerald; and it was no doubt the remembrance of that loveliness which made Naaman the Syrian exclaim, "Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?" The prophet's injunction to wash in the Jordan, and so be freed from his leprosy, appeared to the haughty Syrian an insult. His ten talents of silver, with as many changes of raiment, and 6000 pieces of gold, seemed likely to purchase all that he wished; such a man would surely find the prophet obsequious, and a path to a cure made plain! But far from that, his silver and his gold were deemed worthless: the prophet had but one course to suggest —"Wash in the Jordan, and be clean;" and the implied alternative was, Decline, and continue a leper as thou art. Now all this may well illustrate the waywardness of man, when he first sets out in quest of spiritual health. He tries to buy it. If he do not offer silver and gold, he at least trusts to repentance and suffering, to his good-

ness, or his tears. But all is unavailing. The way of regaining spiritual health is unique, and He who points to it is inexorable. We must either adopt it, or continue hopelessly uncured. The fountain opened for sin is as resolutely pressed upon the sinner's notice as the Jordan was on the notice of Naaman; and when we do wash in that fountain, we are made clean every whit. The soul becomes what Adam's was before he fell—without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,—and this is indeed the central truth of all the Bible. To it all the prophets constantly gave testimony. On this point especially, they reckoned

> "Each spark of truth a brilliant gem
> To plant in kingly diadem."

Has the reader ever noticed the fact, that just in proportion to the bounty lavished upon man by the God of nature, the more degenerate does man become? Travel through every zone, examine man in every latitude, and that will be found a general law; moral abominations multiply—man sinks and becomes embruted, just in proportion to the richness of the productions and the fineness of the climate where he dwells. One illustration is enough. Where do we find the most debased and blood-thirsty of mankind—in one word, the cannibal? In regions where summer is perpetual—where earth, and sea, and sky all combine to pour their profusion into the lap of man. And that general law operates powerfully amid the evergreen shades and the gleaming beauties of Damascus. In spite of intercourse with many lands, and the humanizing effects which should flow from it, the Damascenes long continued among the most bigoted and hating of all men. It was once death to a Christian to appear unguarded in their streets; and the city from which Paul had to escape, by being let down from the wall in a basket, has thus retained its bad pre-eminence as a place of persecution and violence.

The prominent place which Damascus holds in the Scriptures, might entitle it to a more ample notice. It is first named in the history of Abraham (Gen. xiv. 15, and xv 2). It was originally

governed by its own kings, but was taken and garrisoned by David, (2 Sam. viii.) The Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Romans, were in succession its masters. In apostolic times, it was held by Aretas, king of Arabia Petræa, and father-in-law to Herod Antipas (2 Cor. xi. 32, 33); and in the time of Nero, 10,000 Jews were butchered in Damascus by command of that emperor.

But it is mainly as it is connected with the history and the labours of Paul that this city is interesting to Christians. It was to Damascus that he hastened, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," (Acts ix.) It was in his journey thither that that Lord hailed him with the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" It was there that he suddenly saw a great light, and was smitten to the earth by that power with which he had madly tried to cope. It was to Damascus that he proceeded, after that all-decisive interview; and it was there that spiritual light first dawned on the future apostle's soul. It was there that the Lord appeared in a vision, and assigned his life-and-death task to Paul. There that lion, now transformed into a lamb, began to confound the Jews, and prove that Jesus is the very Christ. There, also, he first tasted of that persecution which he had himself been so resolute in promoting; for his life was put in jeopardy, from the day that he turned from the service of man to that of God. In this way, Damascus is intimately linked with the history of the Church. Effects were there produced which are not yet expended, nay, which eternity will not exhaust. The sum of them is augmented from hour to hour; for, next to the crucifixion of our Lord on Calvary, the most important event in the history of the Church was the conversion of Paul at Damascus. The Christian looks at that city somewhat as he looks at Jerusalem, and amid the crowding attractions, or the equally numerous offensive sights, of the place, this thought is supreme—our God has here appeared in the glory of his power.

Besides the rivers of Syria now described, there are others which

deserve our notice, though they are not very prominent in Scripture. The Leontes, for example, known also as the Litani, and the Kasmieh, rises among the spurs of Lebanon, not far from Baalbec, traverses the plain of Cœlo-Syria, and falls into the Mediterranean, to the north of Tyre. On its banks, we find, besides many other ruins, a castle with the Western name of Belfort, and the Eastern designation of Kalet-es-Sjukif, associated with crusading times; and the river, at a depth of fifteen hundred feet below, rushes wildly along its foamy channel, while the style of the ruins reminds us of Phenicians, of Saracens, and Crusaders, as once dwelling there. Its modern inhabitants are as fierce as those of old could be; for a traveller has been scared from exploring the ruins by stumbling upon the half-devoured carcass of a goat, on which some wild beast had just banqueted.

But it is the river itself which forms the chief attraction here; and a word-picture, by an eye-witness, may place it in some degree before the reader:—"How shall I describe to you," he says, "the windings of the Leontes there before me; no tame silvery line, wreathing through plains or corn-fields; no broad smooth sheet of water, with towns and hamlets, hills and valleys, reflected in its mirror; but a wild mountain torrent, whose green waters dash headlong, and foaming over their rocky bed, as if it were a monster serpent chained, in the yawning gulf many a hundred feet below, where she writhes and struggles evermore to escape her dark and narrow prison between those fearful rocks; but always in vain, save only near the sea, where, an hour and a half north of Tyre, her windings reach a close. You would, perhaps, feel dizzy, were I to ask you to fancy yourself on the edge of the farthest projecting wall of the castle, and looking down from a height of 1500 feet—the height of five tall spires piled above each other—upon the glorious torrent as it rushes past at the foot of the perpendicular rock of Sjukif. In that far deep below, its waters hurtle and roar along with a ceaseless deafening din, but their voice may not reach us here in our calm height. And yonder is the famous plain of

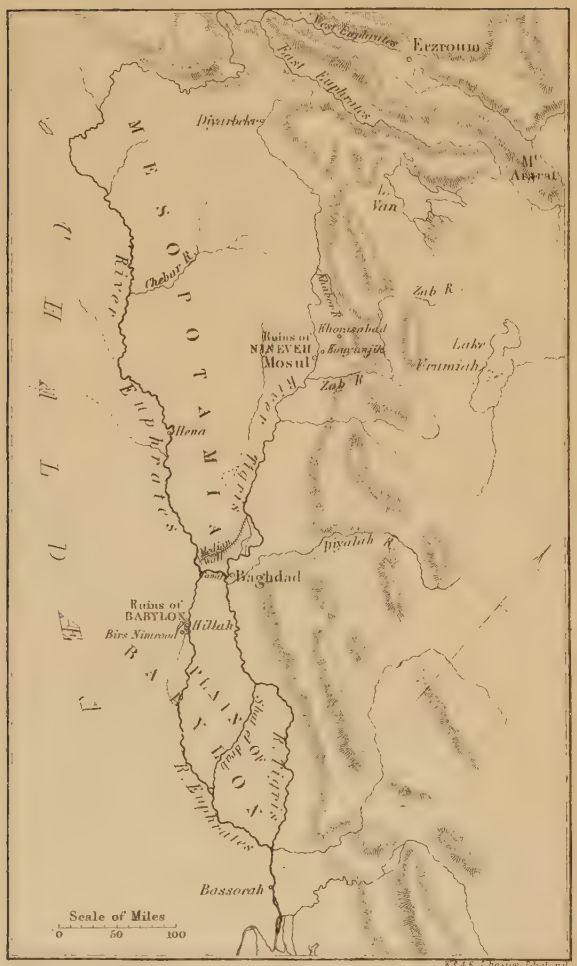
Ijon, the Merj-Ajun, on the opposite side of the river, with its fruitful fields and abundant water-courses. It is a panorama, in short, of mountains and valleys, which you must come and see yourself, if you would form an adequate conception of it." "The awful gorge of the Leontes, with its eagles' nests and leopards' dens, is beyond all description grand and bold."

And perhaps still more might be said regarding the Orontes at some parts of its course. Like the Leontes, it rises near Baalbec, and drains the country of Riblah, Emessa, and Hamath (Numbers xxxiv. 8; Josh. iii. 5; 2 Chron. vii. 8). At first it is tame and simple in scenery; but it gradually acquires a more decided character, and its margin becomes bold, precipitous, and pathless. Wild fig-trees, and the vines which festoon between them, turn many a dell into a jungle there; and when some solitary but resolute traveller has penetrated to those dark recesses, there, more than in most places of the East, dreary and desolate as it often is, he is reminded of the sorner's soliloquy—

> "To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
> To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,
> Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
> And human foot hath ne'er or rarely been:
> This is not solitude; 'tis but to hold
> Converse with Nature's God, and see her stores unrolled."

In an age where the impression is gaining ground that many of the old mines are now wrought out, and that the world is approaching an epoch of sterility, it is satisfactory to know that there are still so much fresh beauty to regale us—so much that has never been explored, inviting us to enterprise and its rewards.

THE EUPHRATES & TIGRIS



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RIVERS OF MESOPOTAMIA.

1. THE EUPHRATES.

By pre-eminence, this is called in Scripture "the great river." Like the Tigris or Hiddikel, it is mentioned as one of the streams of Eden, and was subsequently named as the eastern boundary of the land promised to the children of Abraham. It accordingly became that boundary under David, and as it was also the eastern limit of the Roman Empire, it has thus held a distinguished place in Oriental history. The Euphrates rises, like the Tigris, among the mountains of Armenia, and becomes the Euphrates proper, after the junction of a number of smaller streams which compose it. Dr. Kitto, in one of his journals, thus speaks of its source: "Close by Diadin (near Mount Ararat) flows a small stream of beautiful clear water, shallow and easily stepped over. This is the *Euphrates*. I stood astride it a moment, and then passed over. I was never before so near the source of a mighty and famous river, and my thoughts were many. . . . . The water seems to me more pleasant than any I have ever tasted. . . . . It is something to have seen Ararat and the Euphrates in one day."

At first it divides Armenia from Cappadocia. Then deflecting from the south to the west, it forces its way through narrow defiles and over foamy cataracts, and reaches the level country at last near Samsat. In a winding course it skirts the north of Syria, and hastens to meet the Tigris, after which it falls into the Persian Gulf. The united streams, by means of canals, spread fertility over Mesopotamia and the adjacent regions. The entire length of its course is above 1400 miles, and the breadth varies from 200 to 400 yards, though at some places it is contracted to less than the third of that

extent. It abounds in fish, and is for the most part a sluggish current, which, for a very large portion of its course, does not exceed three miles in an hour. At some places it is about eight feet deep, though at others, camels can ford it—indicating a depth of only four or five feet. Where the stream is confined by hills, the scenery is sometimes not unpicturesque, for trees of a moderate size, Oriental plants, and islands studded with villages, all help to give liveliness to some portions of the river. Add to these the remains of ancient aqueducts, solidly constructed for irrigation, and we have nearly summed up the beauties of the Euphrates.

After reaching the level country, the margin of the river is strewed with Arab huts grouped into villages, and surrounded by herds of horses and cattle, with flocks of sheep and goats. But it is in historical associations that the Euphrates is pre-eminently rich. That it at once watered and defended the ancient Babylon is well known, and our View represents the river in that locality—that the draining of it by Cyrus gave him access in a night to that proud capital, is not less familiar—and two branches of the Euphrates still pervade the plain where Babylon once stood in its glory. Thence to the Persian Gulf, irrigation becomes common, and date-trees now line the river and embower the hamlets, although the level banks, and the flatness of the country, sometimes allow the stream to lay a large tract, said to be sixty miles wide, under water. Near its entrance to the sea, the Euphrates is from twenty to thirty feet deep, while its width, at the greatest, approximates a thousand yards. It is navigable for about 140 miles, though British enterprise has attempted to make its waters available to a much larger extent. Julian the Apostate had 1100 vessels afloat at one time upon the stream; but this Tiber of the East, it may be hoped, is destined for nobler purposes by Him who turns the dry land into water-pools. If Babylon once contained the hanging gardens, the tower of Belus, and stores of gold valued at more than twenty millions sterling, with other marvels, all now so utterly ruined that "the dragons howl in her pleasant places," let us hope

that other sights of beauty will yet be seen, in the fulness of time, on the banks of the Euphrates.

But we should, perhaps, ponder more fully some of the incidents connected with the "Queen of Kingdoms"—Babylon—while adverting to the Euphrates. A passing allusion may not do it justice; and we observe that the Birs Nimroud, represented in the background of our View, is generally believed to occupy the site of the Tower of Babel, the origin, and for ages deemed the glory, of the place. We are thus brought into contact with the memorial of an event which dates from near the Flood, and which has exercised an unspeakable influence upon all succeeding times. It was there that the pride of man culminated—there that he sought to make to himself a name, but only made sure of disgrace. In frustrating an ambitious project, the Almighty there confounded men's speech; and from that day to this, the world has felt the effects of that visitation. Indeed, no case could be selected more clearly illustrative of the descending consequences of sin. Let us leave out of view the western tongues, manifold and various though they be—let us think only of one section of the globe, Hindustan—and how surely has the reign of darkness been there extended and prolonged by what happened at Babel! Count over the discrepant languages spoken from Cape Comorin in the south, to the Himalayas in the north—from the mouths of the Ganges in the east, to Hyderabad in the west—view each one of these as another and another barrier reared in the way of the missionary with God's truth in his hand, or of civilization with its refinements—and then see how profoundly the world, were it wise, would deplore the sin committed on the plains of Shinar. The Birs Nimroud is about 760 yards in circuit, and 200 feet high; and that is a monument surviving the waste of three or four thousand years, to tell how deplorable and deep are the ravages of sin—how man forsakes his own mercies by forsaking his God.

Had we space to record all that is remarkable connected with the Euphrates, we might dwell farther upon the fact that Padan-aram,

the land of Abraham, containing Ur of the Chaldees, his native place (now Urfa), lies upon its eastern margin. That was the home and the country which he left at God's command. There he began to be "the father of the faithful," for there "he went out not knowing whither he went." Terah his father, Nahor his brother, and much that man holds dear, were all left behind, at that high bidding, which made Abraham a wandering exile for the rest of his mortal life. It was thus that the word of God became that man's inheritance, and the will of God his law. It was thus that he set to his seal that God was true, and thus that he was honoured, because he honoured the Holy One. In a word, by the margin of the Euphrates, lessons were taught and learned, on which the felicities both of time and eternity are made by God to hinge.

And as Abraham at the commencement, so Daniel near the close of the Hebrew nation's existence, was signally favoured of God on the banks of the Euphrates. The captive Jews hung their harps on the willows which fringed "the flood," and wept there when they remembered Zion—its long desolation, and its chains. Yet there was among them one whom not merely an earthly king delighted to honour, but, moreover, the King of kings—Daniel, the "man greatly beloved." Prophecies were both uttered by him, and fulfilled by God, on the banks of the Euphrates, which are still confirming the faith of God's people. From the same spot whence man had sent forth an influence noxious as a mildew, over all generations, God sent forth his message to counteract man's machinations; in a word, under the very shadow of the Tower of Babel, Jehovah reared new bulwarks for the Christian faith.

But retribution, we repeat, overtook Babylon at length. Her kings had done their utmost in guilt. The last of them had desecrated the sacred vessels of the temple of Jerusalem, and employed in the service of grossest passion what was meant for the service of God. The cup of iniquity is therefore full, and in a night Babylon becomes a heap. Cyrus captures the city, sacks it, and the king and his haughty princes are put to the sword. It was the

Birs Nimroud

THE EUPHRATES & PLAINS OF BABYLON.

natural result of crime. Belshazzar's sin had found him out at last, and the besom of destruction soon swept him and his city from their place. Alexander the Great advanced the work of desolation begun by Cyrus. The city became "a possession for the bittern, and pools of water;" and when Seleucus built Seleucia on the river Tigris, Babylon fell to rise no more. Its ruins became only a quarry, from which other cities were built. Serpents and scorpions became its chief inhabitants. To the letter the words were fulfilled, "It shall never be inhabited from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their folds there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant places." The records of history, and the story of travellers, proclaim that these dooming sentences have been all and absolutely fulfilled. The ruins of Babylon thus connect us with the hand of the Almighty, as surely as the sun and the stars.

> "Every one,
> From the slight asteroid to the vast orb,
> That lists thy watchword, or the music-march
> Of farthest planets round their monarch suns,
> Marshalled in glorious order, leads our souls
> From system unto system, up to Thee,"

and so do the dreary mounds upon the banks of the Euphrates. The Christian waxes more confident, and seems to be better prepared for his great fight of afflictions, when he sees so plainly that his God reigneth.

Wandering amid these dreary monuments of decay often saddens and depresses. It is like walking in a grave-yard, where memorial after memorial appears, each sounding out some dirge of the past. But the truth which came from heaven takes us, when most dejected, by the hand. She bids us look through the dark portals of the grave to the bright eternity which greets the believer beyond it. Babylon, once a majestic queen, may be a dis-

mantled or a shapeless ruin now; but the city of our God is a joy for ever. The Euphrates, once a boundary of Eden, may witness many revolting scenes upon its margin now; but is not the river of life proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb, to wind through eternity unstained? The voice of all, then, is "Excelsior!" and he that hath ears to hear will seek a heart to obey: obeying, he will be blessed.

"The drying up of the Euphrates," predicted in Rev. xvi. 19, is an event regarding which a great diversity of opinion exists; but this is not the place to enucleate the difficulty. It refers, by general consent, to the overthrow of the Mohammedan power in the East, and the consequent freedom of the nations to proclaim or to welcome Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life." But whatever doubt may surround such questions, this much is certain —"all the purposes of God shall stand;" He will do all his pleasure; and when the set time has come, a mighty gulf-stream of truth will roll round and round the world, at once to unite and fertilize, making what is arctic, genial, what is barren, fruitful, and what is polluted, pure.

THE CONFLUENCE OF THE TIGRIS WITH THE EUPHRATES.

2.—THE TIGRIS—ITS CONFLUENCE WITH THE EUPHRATES.

EVERYTHING relating to Eden must be fraught with interest to the student of man, and yet its position can never be ascertained. Two of the four rivers which bound it, according to Scripture, are known —these are the Euphrates and the Tigris—but the Gihon and the Pison are for ever lost. The Tigris is commonly understood to be the Hiddikel of Scripture—a conjecture which seems to some to be confirmed by the fact, that each of these names means *the rapid* or *arrow-like* stream.

One of our Views represents the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates near the town of Korna. The whole course of the former, which rises among the mountains of Armenia, extends to about 1200 miles. On its banks—for example, at Diyarbekr—are many fertile plains and well-cultivated gardens. At that place the river is about 250 yards wide, at some seasons of the year, though it be navigable only for rafts. Two hundred miles farther down stands the town of Mosul, which occupies the site, or stands in the vicinity of Nineveh, "the exceeding great city of three days' journey"—the long entombed, but now disinterred capital of palaces, of mighty monarchs, and of hoary dynasties. On the banks of the Tigris, which are at some places steep, and now covered with brushwood, which furnishes shelter for lions and other wild animals of the district, Nineveh became the scene of lordly dominion, of bloated pride, of fabulous wealth, and inconceivable luxury. There Nimrod laid the foundations of his metropolis and his power; there Ninus and Semiramis ruled; but their pomp has been buried for thousands of years, and it has been reserved for strangers from empires which were not

founded for many centuries after Nineveh had waned into decay, to decipher its hieroglyphic history, and tell us, in shreds and patches, of the glory or the shame of its mighty rulers.

The Scriptures give us only glimpses of the history of Nineveh. About 900 years before the Saviour came, Jonah was commissioned to preach to it, and it repented. The banks of the Tigris thus resounded with the brief but imposing denunciation of the prophet. But they witnessed also the peevish waywardness of man, in contrast with the long-suffering of God. Its walls 150 feet high, its prodigious towers of defence, its gorgeousness and magnificence, had no charms for Jonah. The idolatry of Nineveh was an abomination in his sight, and he cordially sought its destruction. And though long delayed, it came at length. Shapeless mounds of earth, round which floated some vague traditions, were, till lately, all that remained of Nineveh. The arrowy Tigris rolled on as before, but the city became a nameless mass of ruins or mounds of earth. Kouyunjik, on the east bank, opposite to Mosul; Nimroud, about eighteen miles farther down the Tigris; with Khorsabad at some distance from the other two—all represented in the Engraving—are supposed nearly to indicate as many corners of Nineveh, enclosing a space about sixty miles in circumference. The whole neighbourhood along the banks for many miles is strewed with fragments of brick, pottery, and similar materials, proclaiming at once the former importance and the present desolation of the spot.

But the Tigris hastens away from the dreary scene, and gradually widens till its breadth at one place becomes 500 yards. The city of Bagdad is situated upon its banks, and about 350 miles below that city, the Tigris enters the Euphrates, as our View represents. Upon its banks, or near them, Jonah, Daniel, and Ezekiel had all uttered the prophecies of God, and to a jot and a tittle, these have been fulfilled. The recent excavations have so verified the predictions, that baffled infidelity, like the baffled magicians of Pharaoh, has been compelled to confess, "This is the finger of God," and we need seek no better armour in which to contend for the faith

Mosul *Mound of Kouyunjik* *Tomb of Jonah*

THE TIGRIS AT NINEVEH.

than the banks of the Tigris and the excavations of Nineveh supply; although we have the highest authority for saying, that men will not believe, even though a city has thus been raised from the dead.

But, if we would grow truly wise, we should not pass so lightly as we have done over the doings of Jonah at Nineveh. His position, when sent on his embassy thither, was one of the most trying in which any mortal was ever placed. To think that the millions who dwelt there, eagerly pursuing pleasure, and hunting with half a martyr's zeal, all that could fascinate or fetter the soul, would listen to the voice of a sorry stranger unfriended and alone, appeared to flesh and blood a foolish and a romantic hope. And that any warning words, though uttered in thunder, would long startle or arrest that throng, immersed in the pursuits of business, engrossed with the glories of war, or drenched with the pleasures which follow in the train of wealth, would seem quixotic to flesh and blood. For a time it seemed foolishness to Jonah, and he would not go to Nineveh. His faith did not stand the trial, and he fled.

But even when he did resort to the city, we can understand how his heart would faint and fail at the sight of its gorgeous wealth, its prodigious strength, and its myriads of people. Many who have blamed "the peevish prophet," never fairly pondered the difficulties which he had to face. Nobles in their pomp and pride —lovers of pleasure in their hot pursuit—the devotees of wealth—the slave and his enslaver—all were, by nature and practice, pledged to oppose the prophet. Yet all these he must assail—to all these he must deliver the heavenly message.

But Jonah did at length deliver it—he delivered it in faith, and was honoured in his deed. The streets and palaces heard the dirge-like cry—"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed," —and from the king to the menial they repented. Now that may tell us how our great cities may be reformed. Not by human devices. Not by mere culture for the mind, or mere care for the body, but before and above all, by the truth of God, proclaimed

on the one hand, and believed on the other. That is the divine panacea—the infallible specific—and they who employ it in faith will prosper in their measure, as Jonah did at last. It is on the word of God believed that the eternity of man is thus made to depend.

But, long after Jonah's day, Nineveh and the Tigris witnessed the triumphs or the honours of another prophet. It was there that Daniel saw in vision the roll of the future opened up, and had the knowledge of omniscience imparted to him (Dan. x. 4). There, also, in long subsequent times, the fiery Tamerlane and his hordes wrought desolation among the people; for that resistless conqueror is said to have piled up there, on one occasion, 90,000 human heads, as a trophy to his desolating power. And in our own day, the Tigris and Nineveh have again become like household words. The excavations which have been made there, the monuments disinterred, the corroborations of heavenly truth discovered, as already mentioned; the helmets, the coats-of-mail, or fragments of them, the sphinxes, the winged bulls, and the innumerable proofs of the pride and pomp of Nineveh,—all lead us away back to the banks of the Tigris, and to Scriptural times. In a sense, they make the world three thousand years younger, at least they carry us that far back into the dimness of the past. And who does not see the wisdom of God in raising up *now* and *there* such witnesses for His truth? *Now*, when infidelity is doing its utmost in many lands to prove the truth to be a lie. And *there*, where neither fraud nor forgery can be so much as suspected. Some portions of the Bible are twice given on the banks of the Tigris. First, prophecies are there uttered, and, secondly, they have been fulfilled, —fulfilled through every jot and tittle; nay, fulfilled once, and refulfilled once more.

One instance, in illustration, may suffice. Scepticism has long questioned the truth of the record regarding the magnitude of Nineveh. "A city of three days' journey," understood to mean one about sixty miles in circumference was long deemed at the best

mere oriental hyperbole. But the discovery of the four mounds, Korsabad and Kouyunjik, Nimroud and Karasules, indicating the four corners of the Leviathan city, covering a space very nearly sixty miles in circumference, at once confirms the prophet's words, and assures us once more, that among credulous things infidelity is the most credulous.

In the Engraving of the Tigris at Nineveh, a structure of some prominence is seen, upon a mound to the right of the View. It is a monument to the prophet Jonah, under the title of his Tomb. We have already seen that the Mohammedans reverence the Old Testament prophets, and even the Saviour himself, in as far as he was a prophet. Among the rest, Jonah is signalised as having been in some manner connected with Nineveh, and the monument here represented is the result. It stands above the buried glories of the fallen city, as if the prophet might rejoice, even in the grave, over the prostration of that place whose respite provoked his peevishness, and made him wish to die. The whole vicinity is eminently suggestive, and speaks to us in language more eloquent than man's of the misery which follows the extinction of heavenly light. Nineveh might have been saved, but she would not; and became

> "The wretch who slights the bounty of the skies,
> And sinks while favoured with the means to rise;"

and these mounds are her burial-place.

We have seen that on these mounds, and in their neighbourhood, the fragments of a former magnificence are often found by the traveller. In like manner, we can present only fragments of the story of Nineveh, and here is one.

When it was besieged by the Medes under Arbaces, and on the eve of being sacked, Sardanapalus the king determined not to survive his capital, or fall into the hands of his enemy. Influenced by a tradition of the country, which said that the city would fall when the Tigris became its enemy, he gave himself up to despair during a signal overflowing of the river. He constructed a huge

funeral pile within his palace, and, disdaining to grace the triumph of his conqueror, Sardanapalus placed upon it all his wealth, his harem, and all that was deemed precious by a royal Eastern voluptuary. He next mounted the pile himself, and then caused it to be ignited, so that he, and all that he reckoned dear, perished in the blaze.

The enemy speedily became masters of the city. As Nahum had predicted (i. 10), "While they were folded together as thorns, they were devoured as the stubble fully dry." The same prophet promised the captor of Nineveh abundance of silver and gold (Nah. ii. 9), and profane history corroborates the prediction in regard to the Median capital. Ecbatana was enriched by the spoils of the city which had repented when Jonah preached, and was therefore respited, but which too soon returned to its former abominations, and was therefore at last swept utterly away. Now, was not the doom of Sardanapalus, perishing in a conflagration kindled by his own hand, a singular emblem of every self-ruined sinner? And what is the whole life of many, but just the constructing of a mighty pile, in which to destroy at last both themselves and all to whom their influence extends?

Farther, the lapse of time, and the revolutions of our globe, render it impossible, as we have just seen, that we can ever exactly ascertain the site of Eden. The wildness and extravagance of men's speculations on the subject have only enveloped it in additional darkness. By means of the Euphrates and the Tigris, however, we seem to be pointed at least to the region where man's first home was placed; and it appears to give something like tangibility to the subject, when we learn that a critic so cautious, so judicious, and so free from all extravagance, as Calvin, placed Eden somewhere near Korna, that is, at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates, according to our View. Will the reader glance at the Engraving? Will he suppose that sin, and all its effects, had no existence in our world? That there were neither floods to inundate, nor tempests to overthrow, nor earthquakes to upheave? Let

the heavens supply just enough of sunshine, and the earth and the sky together just enough of moisture, and let all that is beauty to the eye in vegetation, as we know was the case in Eden, reappear. Then it seems as if the spot to which we point were no unmeet scene in which to place the garden which Jehovah planted, and sinless man was set to keep and dress. We repeat, we do not assert anything as certain on this subject. The point can never be decided now. But we do say that the region which is watered by the Euphrates and the Tigris, especially near their junction, invites the eye to give judgment in its favour. Eden there, with the Bible in our hand, becomes by some degrees a more palpable or a more visible reality.

And if there be any truth in these views, then our eyes behold *near about* the spot where innocence once dwelt. From man, the delegated lord of all, down to the lower animals, through all their grades, harmony there reigned. There was literally peace on earth. The moral and the material were then alike in unison with the mind of the Supreme; and because he was obeyed, the world was serenely happy.

But, in contrast with all this blessedness, it is more than worth our while to glance at what is implied in the act by which that peace was violated. Men marvel at the sin which turned our world into a graveyard, and our race into its tenants. Some laugh at it as little, and scoff at it as ridiculous; but he who understands the sinfulness of sin, and remembers the position in which man was placed in Eden, will form a different and a sounder estimate, and a bare enumeration of the component parts of the first transgression suffices to explain why "the wages of sin is death,"—why the Holy God could not allow it to pass unpunished, and that to the uttermost.

Is it a sin to make God a liar? The first transgression tried to do that.

Is rebellion against the King Eternal a sin? Then Adam was guilty.

Is idolatry, or trusting a creature rather than the Creator, a sin? Then Adam was guilty again.

Is it base to be ungrateful where we have been loaded with countless favours? All that Adam perpetrated.

Is pride criminal? Then Adam was proud.

Is it a sin to grasp at God's gifts, and despise himself? Adam thus sinned.

Is it debasing to allow bodily indulgence to have an ascendant over the soul? Then Adam was thus morally debased.

Is it disreputable to violate a trust—a trust the most solemn and momentous that ever was given to man? Then of all that Adam was guilty. All these, and many other forms of iniquity, entered into the first sin. With all these the first man is indubitably to be charged. The authority of God, the beauties of Eden, and a thousand other influences, were all set aside, somewhere near the streams to which we are now adverting.

But while man was thus debased, God was highly exalted. There, in spite of these complex sins in one, he promised a Saviour to the lost, a Redeemer to the enslaved, and life to the legally dead. Those waters, as they rolled, heard the first accents of grace in the first promise, and ever since, the promise has been fulfilling. Its gentle voice appeared to be drowned for a while amid the thunders of Sinai. When even Moses feared and quaked, it might seem to be hushed for ever. But when David took the harp to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd"—when Isaiah, from the third heavens, told of coming mercy—above all, when the Saviour said, "It is finished," that promise was heard once more; nay, it was fulfilled; and the hopes which arose between the Euphrates and the Tigris became fruition on Calvary.

CONCLUSION.

Besides the Lakes and Rivers already mentioned, many others are referred to in Scripture, upon which we might profitably dwell. We might trace the lonely wanderings of Elijah by the brook Cherith—perhaps the modern Kelt—and learn the lessons of submission which were imparted to him there. Or we might go with Ezekiel to "the land of the Chaldeans by the river of Chebar," and listen to his appalling denunciations, or hear him preach the Gospel of peace. On its banks a Jewish colony was planted by Nebuchadnezzar, and there, as in many other places, had the stiff-necked people to bear their iniquities as weeping exiles.

Or, confining our attention more closely to the Holy Land, we might have told of the brook Kidron, so closely associated with the Saviour's history, and the scenery around Jerusalem. We might have traced it from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, past the Monastery of Mar Saba, and through its dreary Wady; but though, in former times, a copious stream, or even torrents, must have flowed there, at least at some seasons of the year, few modern travellers have found water in the bed of the brook.

Or the Valley of Eshcol, were it distinctly known, might furnish farther illustrations of truth. The magnitude of its clusters of grapes has furnished materials for many a scoffer, and fed the desires of many who were interested in finding the Bible untrue. But those who have searched out this matter have come back to tell that clusters weighing from ten to twelve pounds are not very uncommon in our own day, in some places of the East; and the safest mode of carrying such productions would be that which the spies are said to have adopted. Nay, bunches have been known to reach the prodigious weight of thirty or forty pounds. Some of the

clusters extend to three feet in length, and some of the individual berries are nearly an inch—so rich are the productions of the vales of Palestine, and so baseless are the objections brought by an ignorant unbelief against the Bible.

Or again extending our range, we might have resorted to Wady Jermak and other streams, where scenes occur concerning which Van De Velde has said that he had travelled in no part of the world where views so glorious and so manifold occurred in so narrow a compass. Not the luxurious Java, he says; not the richly wooded Borneo, and the majestic Sumatra or Celebes; not the paradise-like Ceylon, far less the grand but naked mountains of South Africa, or the low impenetrable woods of the West Indies, yield such views. What a solemn feeling creeps over us here! . . . .

But we pass from all these, and all else that can be said concerning "the land of hills and valleys which drinketh water of the rain of heaven." After all that travellers have written, or admirers eulogized, or sceptics scoffed at, we apprehend that the only intelligence which can make us fully acquainted with that land is,—"Come and see." Gerizim, the mount of blessing, is the type of one section; Ebal, the mount of cursing, may represent another; but the whole viewed together is like a second Bible, or, at least, a solemn commentary on the first; and the traveller who has not yet visited that country where God in very deed dwelt on earth among men, has shut himself out from a crowd of enjoyments by keeping at a distance from the Hills and Valleys of the Holy Land.

While wandering beside the Rivers and Lakes of Palestine, we have said little of the religion which is now ascendant in that land. It is well known, that from the Mosque of Omar, which occupies the site of the Temple at Jerusalem, to the remotest hamlet of the widowed land, the creed of Mohammed, the religion of the Sultan, is professed. At many places, there are false forms of Christianity. In Nazareth, for example, at Bethlehem, and else-

where, the Greek and Papal superstitions seem to contend which shall do most to bury the truth of God below the legends and inventions of man, and His worship beneath graven images. The Bible is a proscribed book, idolatry is rampant, and relics are adored, as if each were a God, and could bless its worshippers. In the Holy Cities also—that is, at Jerusalem, at Hebron, at Tiberias, and Safed—the Jews are found in considerable numbers, hugging the shadows, or listening to the empty echoes, of their former grandeur. And here and there, no doubt, there are living Christians—"*one in a city, and two in a family*"—for the Lord never leaves himself without a witness. At Jerusalem, moreover, there is a church in which the word of God is an open book, and where the gospel of his grace is made known to the perishing. But all the land, from Hasbeyiah to Beer-sheba, and from beyond Jordan to the Great Sea, is lorded over by the followers of Mohammed. They oppress and they despise, they plunder and they massacre the other inhabitants, often with little or no restraint, and their untamed habits at once doom the country to neglect—for who would, of choice, associate with robbers?—and the people to misery—for who can be happy with death in violent forms constantly hovering near?

But a single incident may suffice to show the condition of the Jews and the Christians in many places of Palestine. When M'Cheyne was at Safed, he and his companions "found all the Jews there living in a state of great alarm. The troops of the Pasha had been withdrawn, being engaged in the war, and the Bedouins were every day threatening an attack to plunder the town. Only four soldiers had been left to defend them, and these, along with ten Jews, used to patrole the town all night, to give alarm in case of an assault. We observed how poorly clad most of the Jews seemed to be, and were told that they had buried under ground all their valuable clothes, their money, and other precious things. It was easy to read their deep anxiety in the very expression of their countenances: they were truly in the state foretold by Moses more than 3000 years ago—'The Lord shall give thee a trembling

heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind; and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life.'"—The situation of Safed is beautiful exceedingly. The Mountain of Naphtali, verdant to the summit, calmly greets the eye of the visitor. A fine undulating vale is stretched out below, and pleasant groves of olives and vineyards, supported by terraces, cover the slopes. But though the country is beautiful, many of the inhabitants are wretched; the followers of an alien and a hated faith hold them in grinding bondage.

Now, what is the remedy for all this woe? Open the written word—believe on the Incarnate—that is the only adequate reply. Nowhere in the whole world can man be so convinced that the Bible is divine, as in that land where most of it was inspired. Wherever the principles of heavenly truth have been obeyed, Palestine has flourished like a green bay tree; but as often as that truth has been forgotten or ignored, bondage, degradation, "fear day and night," with a misery which the world's history can scarcely match, have been the lot of the Jew. At this moment, and for centuries past, all Palestine has been trodden down of the Gentiles; and though, from time to time, there have been gleams of hope, now from war, anon from diplomacy, then from colonizing, still, the land is peeled and bare. The only spot within its sacred limits which the Jews are permitted to enjoy without insult, is "the place of wailing" at Jerusalem; and we repeat, the remedy for their woe is the Bible. Let that word have free course. Let the minds of men be plied by its truth, or touched by its love, or taught to feel its holiness, and entertain its hopes—the solitary places will then be glad, and all that Inspiration has sung of the goodly land will yet be accomplished. It would in time be cleared alike of the Greek and the Latin superstition; while the promise made to the father of the faithful would be fulfilled especially in Palestine—it would call the Saviour blessed, and then it would be blessed itself. We repeat it again and again—the remedy for the woes which now press upon the Holy Land is the Bible and the Son

of God. The present prospect may be dark—there may scarcely be a streak of light in the cloud—yet a nation may be born in a day.

Finally, it might have added some interest to these Sketches, had we adverted to the natural history of the Holy Land. We have seen that, in former times at least, the lion made his lair by the margin of the Jordan. The buffalo is found in the Upper Plains; the leopard is sometimes seen in the recesses of Lebanon, or among the gorges of the Leontes; and other beasts of prey are occasionally heard or tracked. By some of the rivers—for example, the Arnon—gazelles are not seldom seen; and on their track, beasts of prey are sometimes found. The American Exploring Expedition thought that they saw traces of a tiger in such circumstances; but others more correctly conclude that it was a leopard.

The mode of hunting the gentle gazelle in some places of the East, is sufficiently cruel. On the eastern frontiers of Syria, there are several places called Mussiade, set apart for that purpose. An open place in the plain, about a mile and a half square, is enclosed on three sides by a wall, so high that the antelope (or gazelle) cannot leap over it. But decoy openings or gaps are left at different parts of the fence, and near each gap a ditch is dug outside. The ground is always thus prepared near some brook or fountain, and when the herd approach to drink, peasants, lurking for the purpose, scare them into the enclosure, where they soon attempt to leap over the wall, and be free. But that they can accomplish only at the gaps where they fall into the ditch, and are sometimes captured by hundreds. The chief of the herd always leaps first, and, as in the case of sheep, the whole speedily follow their leader. The flesh is prepared for food, and the skin is manufactured into a kind of coarse vellum. Such is briefly one of the wild sports of the East.

But we must close. We have glanced at the past of Palestine, and seen how its hills and valleys are peeled—its people scattered—its glory in the dust. But that word which so exactly describes all the past, points to bright things for the future. The Rod from

the stem of Jesse—the Righteous Branch is yet to flourish in that land; for "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea" (Isa. xi. 11). A groaning world may well stand a-tiptoe for that consummation—for is not "the receiving of the Jews" to be "life from the dead" to the Gentiles? They are not all unwise, then, who are investigating such points with the books of the prophets wide open before them. They may have formed visionary theories about prophecy, or actually tried to be prophets; but their labours are not all like water spilt upon the ground. Nay, in their measure, they are preparing for the time when "there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

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